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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 604. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 28TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

Price One Penny.

No. 604.

Week Ending
July 28th, 1900.

A RIVER STORY.

Two young men in flannels stood on the landing-stage of Messrs. Daws' boat house, which is situated under the bridge at Great Marlow. They were of the ordinary type of young Englishmen who spend five and a half days in the City and the remainder on the river.

"We want a canoe," said Adam to Daws, who was asking their requirements.

Daws was sorry but there was not one.

Adam's eye drifted among the punts and boats tied up to the stage, and rested inquiringly on a white canoe, with green silk cushions, that rocked daintily at the end of her white line.

Heathcote, of the red hair, went over and rested his shoe on the little white boat.

"Can't we have this?"

No, that was a private one.

Heathcote moved it and saw the name, *My Queen*, in gold letters. It was a very small Canadian canoe and evidently new.

"Smart one that; whose is it?" he asked.

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"Don't know, sir, I'm sure. Came down from Wilders', of Maidenhead, last night with no name; just an order that the owners were coming to-day. Belongs to two ladies, I think one of the men said," replied Daws.

Adam fancied himself with one lady in the canoe, but said nothing. Adam very often did fancy himself. He was dark and slim, with grey expressive eyes and gifted with more than the ordinary amount of self-complacency that is usual amongst young men. But then he was his uncle's heir and that made a difference.

So he took a skiff and sculled away across the river with Heathcote engaged, behind a big cigar, in the ardous task of steering. It was a magnificent Sunday with an Italian sky overhead and scarcely any stream at all. Heathcote's eyes closed and he let the lines fall slack.

Adam looked at him with amusement. His head had fallen back on the turkey red cushion and his cigar had gone out. Then he slipped the sculls and settled himself down to lazily enjoy the perfect afternoon. The boat drifted a little, unnoticed by its occupants, then a little more, and then got caught in a few weeds and roots and swung round.

Suddenly both young men felt a violent shock that nearly capsized them and found themselves being rudely shaken back again.

Heathcote sat up, his face as red as his hair and a strong expression came from Adam's end of the boat. Their assailant was a tall young man in grey flannels who was sculling alone, and at a good rate, and quite close to the bank, too.

"Smart one that; whose is it?"

"What the dickens do you mean, sir?" cried Heathcote angrily, "Can't you look where you are going?"

"Sorry," was all the offender vouchsafed as he laid vigorously to his oars with the apparent intention of making up for lost time.

"Sorry be hanged!" retorted Adam, "If you don't know the way to row, get someone to teach you!" which was a somewhat unnecessary remark, as the stranger was a good oarsman. But Adam was nettled. The sudden collision had startled him.

"If you don't know the right side of the river, tie your boat up and walk!" came the reply of the fast disappearing man in grey, and a punt full of girls, which was passing, laughed.

Heathcote looked round him suddenly. They were on the wrong side!

They were both silent. Both wanted to blame the other because there is nothing so humiliating as being made a fool of on the river. Both were experienced boatmen and then to be caught over such a simple matter as the wrong side of the water!

Adam put the oars out and pulled savagely across to the other side.

Heathcote did nothing—one of the girls in the punt, which had just passed, knew him, and he felt sure that the little incident would get repeated and that he would not shine as the hero.

"I hate a boat!" said Adam suddenly. "With a fool in it like you that can't steer, it's no pleasure."

Heathcote opened his eyes wide, "By jove! I like that," he said. "Go back and get a punt, old chap."

And Adam did.

Daws shook his head.

"Just too late, sir, 'ad a nice one five minutes ago, that gentleman just gone out with two ladies in it," and he indicated a party in the distance.

Adam looked. Two sunshades in front of several cushions and a tall man in grey who stood behind and punted with long graceful strokes.

"Well, I'm hanged!" was all he said as he recognised the figure. "I wonder who that fellow is?"

"Let's go into the George and Dragon and find out," remarked Heathcote as he put on his coat and lit a cigarette.

"Yes, I owe him one. I'll find out all about him."

But somehow they didn't.

Nobody seemed to recognise the description or know anything about him; which was curious, as the George and Dragon was held to be the great authority on those matters in the whole of Marlow.

"Some bounder down from Saturday to Monday, I suppose," said Adam, to ease his own feelings, and then they both went home to tea.

In the evening they went on the water again.

The little white canoe was up under cover then and her cushions were put carefully away. Her owners had not come.

On Monday morning the London train was ready to start, the guard's whistle was in his mouth, and comfortably ensconced in the corner seats of a first class smoking carriage, sat our friends of the day before.

Then there was the scatter of porters and the babel of excited voices.

Then the door of their carriage was flung violently open and a man jumped in.

Both occupants looked up.

The new comer was tall and slight and dressed in grey.

Adam looked across at Heathcote. Neither wore a

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very pleased expression, but the latter turned away and looked out of the window.

As they passed the end of the station he saw a dog cart, in which were seated two girls. Heathcote had as keen an eye of feminine beauty as any man and he started up with a short exclamation.

"By Jove, Adam! Look at those!" They were both young and yet evidently not sisters although somewhat alike in figure. One, who was driving was dressed in a rather severely cut light green dress while the other who was fair was in pink.

That they were both exceedingly pretty was all that the two men could see, as the train was gathering speed.

"I wonder who they are?" said Heathcote, who prided himself that he knew everyone.

"That's three to find out," replied his friend with a side look at the third occupant of the carriage.

"I wonder if Deacon is in this train; I hope not," said Adam presently.

"Wouldn't be a bit surprised; he is staying down here with his wife somewhere, he told me so."

Deacon, be it known, was the head of the large stock-broking firm of which the two young men were junior members.

"I wonder what sort of wife he has got this time; some old one I suppose who has caught him for his money," said Adam.

The stranger rustled the leaves of the paper he was reading.

"Not he! I hear she is quite young and pretty too — plays the guitar, and sings or does something. Deacon knows what he's after. Mrs. D——, number one, was enough of the old kind to satisfy him. This one is young enough to be his daughter, they say."

"Good gracions, girls will marry anything," said Adam.

"Yes, my boy, with £14,000 a year, they will!"

The leaves of the paper rustled again.

Adam looked across the carriage. The stranger was frowning as if the news were unpleasant.

Adam wrote on the margin of the *Telegraph*:

"The Johnnie does not like our conversation; perhaps he knows her."

Heathcote read it and wrote underneath:

"Good job—he's one that got left perhaps."

And they both laughed.

The same evening they were in Hurley lock The gates were open although there were several boats already inside. Adam was leaning back in the punt and watching three fat Germans who were trying to get a hold with the boat hook, and he did not notice Heathcote (who was standing up) become suddenly very intent on the open lock gates.

A canoe with two occupants shot through the gates.

Suddenly he heard him say in a low, rather intense voice:

"Adam, look what's coming in!"

The young man turned to see a canoe with two occupants shoot through the gates, propelled by one swift stroke, and ride coquettishly alongside their punt.

All eyes were directed to the little craft. It was white, with gold letters and green silk cushions.

Gracefully reposing at one end was a girl with fair hair and a pink dress, while paddling, was another in green.

Adam gave a gasp, and having his hand over the side,

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My Queen pass d and crushed it between the two boats.

"Sorry," said the girl in green, giving him a look out of her large brown eyes, and Adam straightway felt as if he were honoured in having the skin taken off his knuckles.

He bowed gracefully.

"Pray, don't mention it," he said gallantly, hiding his hand so as not to let her see the blood.

The fair girl turned at the sound of his voice and regarded him with a slow inquiring glance.

The young man was unable to decide whether the girl in green with the magnificent eyes and the hair done *à la Merode* was prettier than the more fragile beauty of the girl in pink with the fluffy golden hair and the white sun-bonnet, or *vice versa*.

He was most anxious to prolong the conversation but could find no way to do so.

"Got any change, Adam?" demanded Heathcote, whose eyes had been fixed on the fair paddler ever since the canoe came into the lock.

Adam put his hand into his pocket and the girl in pink saw it was covered in blood.

"Oh, Cecile!" she said in a pained voice. "Look at his hand, you did that with the canoe. How horrid of you."

Cecile looked at the hand—rather indifferently. "I'm sorry, but you should not keep your hands outside the boat. They are apt to get hurt," she said.

Adam was delighted.

He acknowleged he was wrong but pronounced his intention to err again if he thought they would again honour him in a like manner.

The girl in the sun-bonnet pursed up her little red mouth, and Cecile did not reply at all.

The lock gates were opening and there being no launches to go first, the white canoe shot forward ahead of all the other craft and was soon out in the open river.

"Poor young man, you did hurt him, Cecile," said the girl in pink.

"Do him good. He was so much taken up looking at you, that he wouldn't have minded if I had cut his hand off!"

"Ditto, Mr. Redhead with you," was the reply.

Cecile shuddered.

"Can't stand red hair, my dear," she answered.

"No, you seem to prefer them rather bald!" replied her companion.

"Less hair—more intellect,' said Cecile.

Her companion suddenly sat up and the canoe rocked perilously.

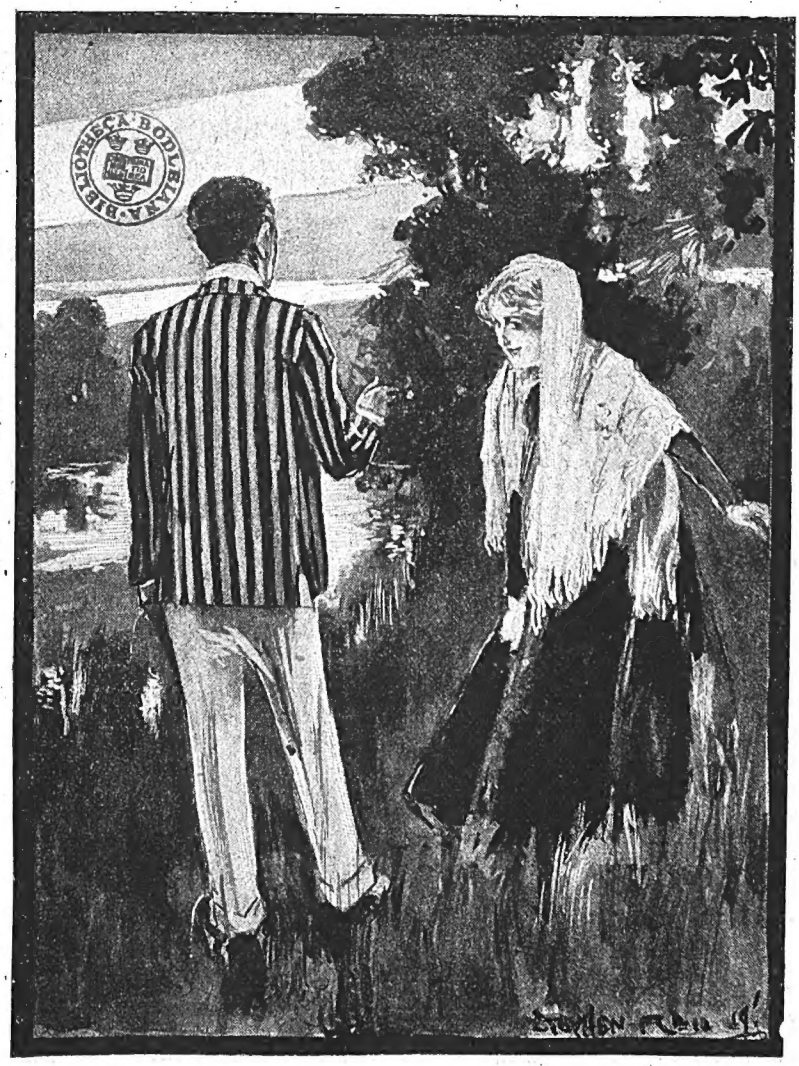
"I say, Cecile," she said, her blue eyes dancing with fun. "Shall we ask them if they would care to change places with us for a little while? Red hair can come in with you, and I will go in the punt with the injured hand."

Cecile rested the paddle and stared at her.

"You must be quite mad! I shall take you home if this is how you intend to behave!" she said severely.

"On the contrary, it is I who will take you home now, you have been working long enough. Get up against that tank and we will change places."

Half an hour later, Adam and Heathcote who had now got ahead passed the canoe, going at a smart rate, the figure in pink being now at the end. Adam raised his hat, to which the canoeist responded by a saucy little nod, but Cecile's eyes were shut and she made no movement, which cast down the heart of Heathcote.



"That's a good thing. Cecile doesn't like boys."

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"Going to the wedding?" inquired the landlord of the Chequers, as Heathcote strolled in that night.

"What wedding? I haven't heard about any wedding!" he retorted rather testily.

The landlord raised his eyebrows. "Thought you knew everything!" he said with a chuckle. "Well, I'll tell you. Lord and Lady Martin's daughter, the Hon Miss Blair is to be married here on Friday. They've taken the big house up by Hurley, and the wedding is to take place in the church on the river. It's to be a grand wedding, I'm told."

"Oh, indeed. I've heard of her, she's pretty, isn't she?"

"I don't rightly know that. she doesn't come into the town here much, so nobody knows her. They are very select people, and keep themselves very much to themselves."

"Who is she going to marry?"

"Gentleman in the Guards, sir—Fitzhoward, I think his name is, you should go to the wedding, sir, it will be a grand affair."

"I daresay Deacon's going. I'll get him to get me an invitation."

"They might be there," said Heathcote in an undertone to Adam.

The landlord caught the name.

"Deacon—yes, Mr. Deacon came in here and told me all about it," he said.

Adam was dubious. It was one thing to be employed in a rich stockbroking firm, but it was quite another to ask the head of it for invitations to select weddings.

But Heathcote determined that he would ask, whether his request was granted or not.

They had met the two girls in the white canoe several times but could never get a chance to speak to them.

Adam, it is true, raised his hat to them, and the girl in pink always smiled, but further than that they could not get.

However, one night, when Adam was strolling alone by the riverside smoking a cigar before turning in, he met the girl in pink as they called her dressed in some clinging black material, and with a fleecy white shawl over her head.

She started when she saw his solitary figure and seemed half inclined to go back. However she changed her mind and ran on calling "puss, puss!"

Here was Adam's opportunity.

"Allow me to help you look for your cat," he said. raising his cap, inwardly thankful that Heathcote wasn't there.

She recognised his voice directly.

"Oh it's you!" she said with a little laugh. "How glad I am! I thought you were a tramp! Yes, do help me find the cat. It is a grey Persian and one of the presents, so I dare not lose it," she said.

Adam passed over the humiliating fact of having been taken for a tramp and hunted diligently.

"Was it a birthday present?" he asked.

"Oh, no—one of the wedding presents. The wedding on Friday, you know, so it mustn't be lost. Besides it is very valuable," was the reply.

The wedding? Adam's mental vision brightened considerably. He would get in ahead of Heathcote yet!

"I want to go to the wedding, awfully," he said. "I've heard that it is to be very pretty."

"I can get you a card, if you like," she said readily.

"Oh, it is too kind of you. I should like it so much—and—will you be there?" he asked.

The two young men read the name.

There was silence for a minute. Then she said:

"Yes, I shall be there."

"Then I shall enjoy it much more—shall I see you?"

"Oh, I dare say you will if you look," she said archly.

Adam replied fervently that he would look.

"There!" she said suddenly, "I think I saw its tail disappear in those bushes!"

"Mind, they are at the water's edge and you might fall in. What should I do then?" asked the young man.

"It wouldn't matter if I did fall in. You are here to save me!" she said with a side glance from her laughing eyes.

Adam felt his heart begin to beat rather fast.

The girl continued:

"It is a good thing Cecile isn't here, she would be shocked."

"Would she?" looking with admiration at her dainty little figure.

"Yes, she's very severe, you know."

"She looks it—I don't like severe women"

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"That's a good thing. Cecile doesn't like boys!"

Adam said nothing. He was twenty-three years old and felt the word "boy" to be a thing of the past.

Just then he felt a soft rubbing against his leg and looked down to see a small grey kitten beside him. He handed it to the girl.

"Oh, thank you so much. I am so glad you found it Good-night, I must run in now. Tell me where I am to send the invitation to?" she said.

He took out his card and gave it to her.

Another moment and he was alone.

Thursday came, and Thursday drew towards a close, and Heathcote had got no further with his intention of asking Mrs. Deacon for the invitation.

Adam, the silent, hugged the square of pasteboard in his pocket book and got leave for the day.

He had put up with the boastfulness of Heathcote long enough he said, and besides hadn't the prettiest girl in Marlow sent it to him herself?

It was a stifling day in town and both young men gave a sigh of thankfulness as they got into the train for Marlow.

Heathcote wore a very long face. He confided to Adam that Deacon had looked him up and down and told him he was very sorry he could not get him the invitation.

"You see," he said, "the Martin's are so very particular, and do all their own inviting—I am only one of the guests."

The train was now full of people and three other men got into their carriage, one of them by a strange coincidence, being their old enemy the man in the grey suit.

It seemed as if the presence of this man was the crowning blow to Heathcote. He acted upon him like a red rag to a bull. To start with, he was over six feet and was dark, whereas Heathcote was only medium height, with fiery red hair, one of the banes of his existence.

He grumbled at the heat, the dust, the stuffiness of the carriage, the tobacco somebody was smoking and the dearth of news in the papers, all the way down.

Adam smiled on.

"It makes me mad about that wedding. Those girls are sure to be there, and I'm out of it," Heathcote cried.

"Did you ask Deacon to invite me as well?" put in his friend.

Heathcote raised his sandy eyebrows.

"Hardly," he said. "If a man can't do that for himself he can stay away!"

"Oh, it didn't matter in the least—because I'm going!" replied Adam easily.

Heathcote's mouth opened. "Who invited you?" he asked in amazement.

"She did," answered Adam, with unmistakable emphasis on the pronoun.

The tall man in grey was looking at him, his brows slightly contracted.

"By jove!" ejaculated Heathcote his face getting redder than usual. "Didn't you ask her to invite me?"

"Hardly!" responded Adam.

"If a man can't do that for himself, he can stay away!"

"Well, I'm hanged!" was all the answer.

As they slowly drew into the station, who should they see but two familiar figures, one in green, and one in pink, standing on the platform.

Heathcote jumped up excitedly.

"There they are! I'd give a bob to know who those two girls are," he cried.

"I think I can help you, and it will save your money," said the cool voice of the tall man in grey, as he reached up for his hat.

"The lady in green is my sister—Mrs. Deacon, and the lady in pink is the Hon. Miss Blair. Allow me to give you my card!" and he stepped out.

And the two young men read the name: "Captain Laurence Fitzhoward—Royal Horse Guards—"

Erroll Stanhope.

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ELSIE EVANS' STEPMOTHER.

The Story of an Elopement and a Misunderstanding.

ELSIE EVANS and Herbert Drew were riding along a country lane one bright July morning. This was an almost daily occurrence with them, but to-day, instead of cantering gaily along, the ponies, Bangs and Dixie, were allowed to make their own pace.

They trotted along slowly, coming down at last to a walk in which they edged closer together and finally stopped altogether under the shade of a large oak-tree. This seemed to suit their riders, so Bangs moved up to where he got the benefit of Dixie's tail-swishings and flapped his own little brush impotently on the other side. Both waited for orders.

"Is there nothing that will alter your decision, Bert?" the girl was saying.

"No, my dear, nothing," he answered. "You see, father is so opposed to the newspaper business. He believes all that cheap talk about prying reporters and he thinks I can't be a gentleman in that life. If he would speak a word for me I might get a good job in Southampton, but he won't, and, in fact, I think he kept me out of the last thing I tried for.

"Well, Jack Leonard has found this berth for me on a Glasgow paper and I have accepted and shall go. It will be a bit of a drudgery, for the pay is small, but I shall succeed at that and at nothing else. I'm a good reporter and the training I shall get on a newspaper I can get nowhere else. I shall write a book sometime, but it will be after I have lived long enough, so that it's all reporting—all about real people and things."

Elsie only sighed at his enthusiasm.

"Herbert," she went on, "I simply can't let you go. Life is so uninteresting since father married again. They are not actually unkind, but they don't care where I go or what I do. I'm number three at home. It's tiresome, Bert, and I do love you so. Oh, take me with you if you must go!"

"My darling, I wish I could, and I shall come back for you just as soon as I can. But I shall have to sell Bangs to get money to buy my ticket."

Bangs' ears went up at the sound of his name, and Bert leant over and scratched the delicate ears.

"Heard me, did you, old fellow? It's a crying shame to sell him at an auction, as I must do. I don't suppose I'll get half what he's worth. He's all I've got that's my very own except my watch, and I can't very well get on without that."

"When do you go?" asked Elsie.

There was a weary tone in her voice. She had given up arguing with him and was trying to learn the first page of a woman's lesson, that decisions were not her part. She must stand by and wait.

"I suppose I shall go to-morrow night. To-morrow morning I must arrange about Bangs, get him sold, if possible. This evening I must have a final interview with father. I'm not going to run away, and I don't mean to quarrel with him. To-morrow will be more than full with packing and the last little things that must be done. I'm afraid this must be 'good-bye' for us, dearest. Don't grieve, little girl. I'm going to succeed and come back for you."

"I'll do my best, Bert, but, oh dear, so many things can happen and I've nothing to do but wait."

They rode in silence back along the lane and then took the road leading to Elsie's home. In a quiet spot they stopped and said "good-bye."

Elsie was too proud to make a scene, and she waved quite bravely to Bert as he rode away; but as soon as he was out of sight her head went down on the pony's neck and she sobbed till Dixie became restless and, taking the law into her own hands, walked out into the road.

As her young mistress straightened up and arranged her habit Dixie ventured to walk quickly for a few yards, and as Elsie further recovered and Dixie felt a firm knee against her shoulder, she trotted along easily till they reached home.

The next morning Bangs was surprised to find his head turned towards Southampton instead of towards the pleasant country roads. He resented this change of programme heartily, and in a moment of abstraction Herbert found himself going in the opposite direction to that which he intended.

"You want one more canter through the lanes, old fellow?" he said. "Well, all right, only you must not get too heated or you won't look well when I get you in town." So they ambled slowly along till they came once more to the tree where they had stopped the day before. There they stopped and Bert dismounted and began to caress the pony and examine his points critically.

"There isn't a pimple on him," he said at length; "it's a shame to let him go for less than fifty."

Bangs took the petting Bert lavished on him absently. His bright eyes were fixed on the road ahead and at last he gave a little snort of delight.

Elsie had started out to take her usual morning exercise with a heavy heart, and hardly noticed where Dixie was taking her till they clattered over the bridge at the end of the favourite lane.

"Oh, Dixie," she cried, "not there to-day."

And she reined her in sharply and turned her round. But Dixie had a mind of her own and she wheeled again and started off down the lane.

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Elsie did not check her again, and she soon saw Bert under the tree and blessed the little mare for her instinct.

The ponies and their riders greeted each other warmly.

"I never supposed you would be here to-day," said Elsie, with rising colour, "but as we have met by accident you must tell me how you have got along so far."

"Well, I told father last night and he simply said: 'I'm disappointed in you, my son, but as you are so headstrong I must let you go your own way. You must not expect me to help you.' Then I told him of our engagement and he sneered right out and said: 'Why don't you elope with her and take her along, since your hopes are so high?'"

Herbert stood looking down dejectedly. Finally Elsie said shyly:

"Why don't you, Bert?"

He came close to her and read her eyes in silence, and the temptation became too strong and he yielded.

"I believe you mean it, and if you do I'm going to take you with me, though I won't elope. I won't steal you away as though we were ashamed. How can I, though, unless Bangs brings more than I think he will?"

"Dixie is my own, too," Elsie ventured timidly, "why not sell her? And as for stealing away with me, no one cares where I go, or would bother to come and see us married except my chum, Nellie Grant. I'll arrange it all right at home. I know it isn't the right or usual thing for me to urge you to take me, but I have only you, Bert."

She hung her pretty head and cried a little, so Bert agreed to take both horses to town, make all arrangements, and meet Elsie and Nellie at five o'clock.

Then they rode back to Elsie's home and she told the groom who came out to meet her that Mr. Drew was going to take Dixie over to Nellie Grant's for her to ride in the afternoon. "Miss Grant's horse is lame," she finished glibly.

Bert looked at her in some astonishment. He could have told the necessary lie, but the unnecessary embellishment was beyond him. He did not know women very well.

Elsie ran upstairs with a careless "good-bye" and Bert rode away leading Dixie.

Elsie changed her riding habit for a tailor-made gown, filled a small hand-bag with small necessities, and rang for a maid.

"I don't want to go down to luncheon. Bring me up something light, and ask Porter if father or his wife say anything about my absence at the table."

When the girl came up for the dishes she brought the report that master had said, "Is Elsie out to lunch?" and mistress had said, "I suppose she is at Nellie's."

"Much they care where I am," muttered the girl.

"Marie, bring me my writing-case," she said aloud. Then she penned the following bitter little note:

DEAR FATHER,—I was not at Ne lie's at lunch time, but as you seem to care so little where I lunch, I think I will lunch to-morrow in Glasgow. In fact I am going to be married to-night to Herbert Drew. I am not eloping with him, as his father knows we are to be married. We have sold our ponies and Herbert has a good position in Glasgow, so you need not trouble yourself even to provide an allowance for me hereafter. I know it will be a relief to you to have me out of the way and provided for.

ELSIE.

Having written this cold little note, Elsie cried bitterly and would very likely have torn it up had not the sound of wheels drawn her attention to the window.

There was her handsome father gallantly handing his young wife into the carriage. He even kissed her hand as he sat down beside her, and a loving look passed between them. That settled it, and she placed the note in a conspicuous place on her desk.

Then a new thought struck her. "Why should she go without her clothes?" So she drew out a small steamer trunk and hastily packed it with clothing. Then she summoned John the gardener and said she had a trunk of clothes she wanted to send off, and would he take it down to the station for her, and she would go later and attend to it.

John was stupid and willing, so she had no trouble, and she soon followed him out of the house and made her way to her friend, Nellie Grant.

Nellie was younger and more indiscreet than Elsie, and she entered very readily into her plans, and the two accordingly met Bert at the appointed time and place.

Bert was radiantly happy; he had obtained an advance of fifty pounds on the two ponies, he had his license, and already felt sure that success and happiness were all the future had for them.

They were married at a registry office, and the two young people started away with hearts free from care, sure that love and pluck were to make them the happiest of young couples.

"We may get more money for the ponies, dear; you see I had to leave them as there is no auction till to-morrow, but Mr. Buckley is an old friend of father's and he gave me the advance willingly. He looked a little sharply at Dixie, but I could not tell whether he recognised her or not. Well, here we are together for all time, and free to go where we like and make our own life."

A week later when they were comfortably settled in a modest but home-like boarding house in Glasgow, two letters came for Elsie over which she cried her first tears since she became Mrs. Drew. But the tears washed away all the bitterness of her heart and left her quite happy. These were the letters.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER,—You have quite misunderstood my wife and myself in regard to our feelings towards you. We thought you resented our marriage and that the best course to pursue was to let you entirely alone. We now see our mistake, and that we appeared to you entirely selfish. We hope the new life will bring you great happiness and that you will write and tell us how you are getting on. I will do as you wish about not sending your allowance, but will place it in the bank to your account, and if it should ever be that you need it you can draw on it. I attended Buckley's auction last Wednesday and bought two ponies that answer to the names of Bangs and Dixie. Mrs. Evans has convinced me that I am not too old to ride, and we propose to use them till their former owners come south again. They are rubbing noses now down in the small meadow, and no doubt wondering where you and Bert are. Tell your husband, my dear, to write and ask me to forgive him for stealing you. I will do it, though I would rather have made it a gift.

YOUR LOVING FATHER.

DEAR ELSIE,—I have cried over your note many times. Oh, dear little girl, if you only knew how much I wished you would love me and be like a sister to me. I never expected to be your mother; why, there is only three years' difference in our ages. But you south-country people are so cold—I never could seem to get near you, and your father always laughed when I told him and said: "Well, Elsie is odd, but she will come round." And you never told me of your engagement! I should have liked to plan your wedding, and if it had had to be in a hurry because of that cross old dad of Bert's you could have had my veil and things. But never mind that. Sometimes marriages like yours turn out the happiest. I hope yours will, and that you will soon come home to visit us.

Your loving friend,

AMELIE EVANS.

M.A.C.

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XVI.—HE GOES IN FOR PRIVATE THEATRICALS BUT DOESN'T SUCCEED.

THERE was a furtive smile of triumph on Mr. Bowser's face as he sat down to his cigar the other evening and at the same time took a dozen pages of typewritten matter from his pocket and began to look them over.

It was two or three minutes before Mrs. Bowser's womanly curiosity forced her to ask:

"Is that an article you have written for the newspapers?"

"Not exactly," he replied as his smile deepened.

"Perhaps it's a poem?"

"Hardly."

"Is it a contract?"

"My dear woman," said Mr. Bowser in his most fatherly way as he turned to her, "I have got a little surprise for you. I hadn't meant to tell you for several days yet, but as your curiosity has been aroused and as I may need your assistance, I'll give the thing away now. You know, of course, that I belong to the Booth Dramatic and Literary Club?"

"Yes."

"Well, we are to put on a play in about two weeks, and the proceeds are to go to the war fund."

"You don't say so!"

"Why don't I say so?" he demanded, as the smile chased itself round to the back of his neck all of a sudden. "Is there anything strange in the Booth Dramatic and Literary Club giving a play by amateurs?"

"But none of you are dramatic or literary," she protested. "You simply play billiards and poker and drink whiskies and sodas."

"You'd look nice being dandled!"

Mr. Bowser rose up and looked down upon her with a look meant to squeeze the life out of her body under a pressure of four hundred pounds to the square inch. He fully intended to annihilate her then and there, but he suddenly remembered that he wanted her assistance, and so he contented himself with saying:

"Perhaps you are not to blame for your ignorance, but please don't be malicious. We are to put on a play. The title is: *Why Mr. Dobbins Didn't Get Married.* It may please you or displease you to know that I have been chosen for the part of Dobbins."

"Is it really so?" queried Mrs. Bowser with a puzzled look on her face.

"It is really so. Here is my part.

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I just got it this afternoon. I also have the part of the Widow Winkle, and I want you to read it and give me the cues. We shall have a rehearsal in four or five days. I haven't the slightest egotism about me, as you well know, but I am ready to declare that I expect to make a great hit as Dobbins. I have been told over and over again that I should have chosen the stage for a profession."

"But you never said anything to me about it."

"No? Well, several things have happened which I never said anything to you about, and this is one of them. Will you read the part of the widow?"

"Why, Mr. Bowser!" she exclaimed, after glancing over his part, "how can you ever play this character of Dobbins? Dobbins is supposed to be a little stumpy man weighing about ninety pounds. That is to set off against the widow, who is a large woman and weighs about half a ton."

"But I'm going to make up for the part, ain't I?" he queried with a note of alarm in his voice.

"Can you chop your legs off to play this part? And, you see, Mr. Dobbins makes his entrance through a dumb waiter. Just imagine your trying to squeeze yourself into a dumb waiter. And after he makes his entrance the widow picks him up and dandles him on her knee. You'd look nice being dandled!"

Mr. Bowser grew as white as a bleached snow-drift, and there was a glint of pounded glass in his eyes, but he held on to himself and simply said:

"Go on, woman—go on."

"Well, in the first act the widow demands that you sing a song. She stands you up on a table and you sing. Mr. Bowser, even if you could turn yourself into a bandy-legged little man, what about the singing? The house would either be convulsed with laughter or rise up and bombard you off the stage."

"I understand. Anything else?"

"Let me see. In the second act you are brought on to the stage in a bandbox. You might possibly get one foot into a bandbox, but what about the rest of your body? The widow discovers you and you are put into a cradle and rocked to sleep to the tune of 'Mary's Little Lamb.' I want to be there. I want to see you in that cradle."

"Have you finished with your insults?" hoarsely inquired Mr. Bowser as every individual hair above his ears stood on end.

"Let me look. There seems to be another woman in the play and she wants to marry you. While you are seated at the table in a high chair and the Widow Winkle has gone out to get you some bread and butter and sugar on it, the villainess comes in through the window and steals you and carries you off under her arm. Oh, Mr. Bowser, it would be too funny—too ——"

For three minutes Mrs. Bowser laughed and cried by turns, but Mr. Bowser never made a gesture or opened his lips. He simply stared at her with a large and varied assortment of cold-blooded murder in his eye. When she could control herself she took up the parts again and said:

"Haven't you noticed that after you have been stolen away the woman dresses you up as a girl to escape detection? You are supposed to be a dear, sweet little miss of twelve, who kneels down by her bed every night and says: 'Now I lay me down to sleep.' I can see you in your night-dress, with your hands clasped and an innocent look on your face! You'll make a great hit, Mr. Bowser, and you'll have hundreds of offers to play the part of 'Little Eva' afterwards. Well, let's get to work. I'll help you all I can."

"Woman!" gasped Mr. Bowser, after several efforts, during which his knees knocked together.

"Yes," gently replied Mrs. Bowser.

He wanted to go on, but he couldn't. There was a bone in his throat and sparks danced before his eyes. Apoplexy might have come in another minute but for Mrs. Bowser's action. She rose up and took him by the arm and led him to the sofa and helped him to stretch out. Then she put the camphor bottle to his nose and gently rubbed his forehead.

In about ten minutes the threatened attack passed away, and he sat up with the intention of asserting his dignity and self respect and humbling her to the dust.

"You have ridiculed me—you have insulted me!" he thickly exclaimed, but she seized the arm with which he was gesturing and pressed it down, patted him on the head in a wifely way, and as he sank back on the sofa and closed his eyes and groaned in despair, she said:

"You have ridiculed me—you have insulted me!"

"Poor Mr. Bowser! There is no doubt he was born for an actor, but the part of little Dobbins is not for him—not for him! Some other time, but not this time!"

M. Quad.

[Next Week: "He Believes in Transmigration and Sets Out to Prove it."]

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A TRANSVAAL CINDERELLA.

BOER women have very often fought alongside their husbands and fathers and brothers in the wars of the republics of South Africa. Some of them are capital markswomen and nearly all have the fanatical courage which is noticeable in religious enthusiasts of all climes.

The women, who in the present war fought in the trenches against the British, were doing no new thing.

Their mothers and grandmothers assisted in the defence of many a laager against the rush of Zulu impis.

Far from detracting from their womanly fascinations, the young men of the Transvaal look upon such masculine prowess as greatly enhancing them. Rifle skill and Amazonian dash in time of war on the part of the maids compel the admiration of the young men, as witness the recent case of Marie Dutoit.

Marie was a little Cinderella of the veld. Not all the glamour of fairydom could, however, have persuaded a prince that little Marie was pretty. She was indeed, quite homely. The child was an orphan and lived with the Van Pelts, her uncle and aunt, and her elder cousins, Hendrick, a young man, and Greta and Anna, who may be said to have taken the place of Cinderella's ill-conditioned sisters.

These latter were belles of Boerland, and well-portioned, but Marie had been left, a skinny babe, without a penny. This, with her homeliness, lessened her chance of ever being ni ely married, for the shrewd Boer has a careful eye on a girl's dowry. An old maid, or a bachelor, is a by-word and a thing of abhorrence in the Transvaal. So Marie's lot was sad.

Oom Kris van Pelt was not a bad man by any means. He was a typical farmer and hunter of the Transvaal—a tall, broad, bearded, grave, religious patriot.

When Marie's parents died, he gave the child a home, more from duty than affection or pity, and after that paid little heed to her.

Tante Anne, his wife, was another matter. She would never have turned away the little Marie, partly from a sense that such conduct would scarcely have been Scriptural, but chiefly from a fear of what her neighbours would say; but she did not conceal her opinion that the Dutoits had sinned greatly in dying without leaving a provision for their child.

In the hard years when the mealie crop was burnt by the sun and the oxen perished from lack of water, Tante Anne made things unpleasant for little Marie, for she was a feverish, complaining woman.

"Another such year," she would cry, "and we will be ruined! Providence knows best, but there are so many mouths to feed, so many mouths!"

Such outcries were absurd, for the Van Pelts were better off than many burghers. Her neighbours knew this and smiled at the worrying old woman; but Marie took it all very seriously and redoubled her labours.

From babyhood she worked, until her hands were hard as a boy's, and her face was darkly tanned. A hard, hard childhood was that of Marie Dutoit, whose older cousins were in no wise distressed to see how she slaved.

There is only one career open to the average Boer girl, and that is marriage. Marie was plain, Marie was poor.

Greta and Anna complacently and leisurely looked forward to taking their choice of suitors, but Marie could only sigh and be resigned and secretly dream of some impossible day when the prince would ride over the veld and sound his bugle horn.

She always roused herself sharply from such extremely foolish dreams and dashed, more reluctantly than ever, at all the drudgery of the farm.

Yet one great delight was hers, and that was when Hendrick, her big silent cousin, took her out on the broad plain when he was shooting at the targets and taught her to handle a rifle.

Sometimes he even took her on a hunt, and so keen were her eyes, and so firm her grip, and so steady her open-air-trained nerves, that Marie Dutoit, when sixteen years old, was nigh as good a shot as Hendrick himself.

When she was sixteen the troubled days began, and the Transvaal declared war against Great Britain.

Veld-Cornet Hausmann brought the news, but it was not altogether news. All night the beacon fires had been burning on the higher kops. All night Kaffir runners had been scouring the country with messages from the commandants to the burghers.

All night in many farm houses the women had been at work preparing the rations of biltong, and cleaning the arms of the patriots. All night, throughout the length and breadth of the land prayers had gone up and the veld had echoed the deep-voiced songs of David.

The cornet was a close friend of Hendrick van Pelt. A rich man was he, and influential in so much that he was even in the councils of Paul Kruger himself.

Very popular also was Rick Hausmann, and so good-looking that, even without his wealth, the maidens would have been gracious to him. It may be imagined that, in some of the little Marie's day dreams, the Prince who galloped so cavalierly over the veld was not altogether unlike the young cornet.

"It's war," he said gravely, as he sat down in the farm-house. "I have come for Oom Kris and Hendrick. If they are ready we will join the commando together. Yes, thank you, Greta, thank you, Anna, I will take coffee."

Marie had made the coffee, but her cousins served the cornet. Tante Anne and they hovered about him and chorused denunciations of the rooineks and eulogies of the Boer patriots.

Then first Rick Hausmann smiled on Greta, and again he was cordial to Anna. When Greta smiled, Anna frowned, and when Anna beamed, Greta tossed her handsome head and sniffed. But Marie made coffee, and hid her homely face and looked not at all at the prince of the veld.

When the Van Pelts were ready the women hung about their horses, delaying them to make sure that

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nothing was forgotten, the biltong, the coffee, the sugar, the home-grown tobacco.

Tante Anne, in tears, caressed her spouse and son, but the daughters were more solicitous about the rich and handsome veld-cornet. They were quite cheery. They had no doubts of the outcome of the war.

"Slay them as the Philistines were slain," they cried to Rick. "Drive the Uitlanders into the sea! Oh! how I wish I were a man to go and fight them!"

"Oh! yes, to be a man!" cried Greta, "to be brave and strong——"

"To be such a horseman!" cried Anna, cutting out Greta.

"To be such a sharpshooter!" cried Greta, rudely interrupting Anna.

"We will make much of you when you come back victorious," they cried together.

"And reward me, I hope," said the handsome cornet; but he looked at both and smiled at both, so that the girls, when they had smiled back at him, frowned on each other.

"Good-bye, Marie," said Hendrick.

"Good-bye, cousin," said Marie; "I wish I were going with you."

Then they rode off to join the commando, and Rick only waved his hand to Marie, and all the veld for her grew chill and grey.

The prince was galloping over the veld, but no glad bugle horn had sounded its call for her. Tante was more peevish than ever. The girls were sulky.

"Marie, you've let the coffee get cold!" Tante Anne screeched.

Marie was at the open door, staring after the horsemen, and did not hear nor answer.

"Come in and attend to your work," her aunt cried. "What are you about? Do you think the cornet will kiss his hand to you?"

The sisters laughed shrilly, but Marie hung her head.

"No," she thought, "he will never wave his hand to me. I am ugly, and too poor, but—I should like to take a rifle and be beside him and fight the Englishmen, and —and watch over him."

* * * * *

The fight had begun in a series of skirmishes, but when morning came, the Boers and British were in pitched battle. The speaking of the great guns could be heard at the farm. Sometimes even the rattle of the rifle fire reached across the plain.

The women-folk were terribly excited. War was now very close to their doors, and it was not so easy a thing to sneer at the courage of the rooineks.

Tante Anne rocked in her great chair; the girls were white and unnerved; Marie was restless, with great bright eyes.

All night long spider carts and waggons and litters had been jolting across the veld with burdens of dead and crippled men who were being carried by native servants and friends to homes at hand, for burial or for nursing.

Suddenly, before the glaring sun had yet reached its noontide height, a ragged Kaffir came running and leaping from the distant kopjes, where the battle raged and roared. His eyes were protruding with fright, and his dark face was now grey.

"It is M'Pangwe!" Marie cried, as he came, and they all went out to meet Oom Kris' servant, who had followed his master to the war, as, in olden times, the henchmen followed the knights and squires.

The Kaffir ran up weary and exhausted. A dirty rag bound his arm where a bullet had pierced the flesh.

"Why have you left your baas?" the women cried, and Tante Anne shook her fist at the trembling boy. "You coward dog, if you have run away, I will use the sjambok on you myself!"

"Ni," cried the servant. "No run, Baas Hendrick, him dead in trench. Big baas, him fight and shoot, shoot, Big baas—him say to M'Pangwe—get cart take baas Hendrick to Tante Anne. Me come, run all way."

There was a wailing then in the farmhouse, and terrible cries for vengeance, but the Van Pelts were too sorrowstricken to obey the poor stern father's will.

On Marie fell the task, as on Marie usually fell the harder tasks. She had loved Hendrick, but she was dry-eyed.

Her face was still and stern.

"Is Oom Kris hurt?" she asked the boy, and he told her the old man was safe as yet, as they harnessed the horse.

Her back was turned to him.

"Did you see the Veld-Cornet Hausmann?" she asked.

"He shoot, shoot, shoot with Big baas," said the boy.

When the cart was ready, Marie went inside and filled a great canteen with coffee.

She took some biltong and bread also. Then she got Hendrick's old rifle, which she had often used, and went into the house for a belt of ammunition.

"Tante Anne," she said, "I am going to the trenches with M'Pangwe. He says the battle is hard. The commandant must need every good shot he can find, and I am a good shot. Besides, they have killed Hendrick—and I loved him."

Tante Anne screeched again.

"I need you here!" she screamed. "What can my girls and I do, broken down as we are? Who will help in the house?"

"Greta and Anna must do that unless they will come with me."

At that the girls cried out.

"The trenches are no place for girls," they said.

"Oh!" said Marie Dutoit hotly. "There are women there already helping the men. A woman also has a right to defend the fatherland. My mother fought the Zulus with my father in laager, and Tante Anne herself, when she was younger, could hit a deer."

She drove off with the Kaffir, sorrowing much for Hendrick, her childhood's friend, but hot with bitter anger and vengeful wrath against the British. Also there was a dread in her heart that, arriving, she should find yet another lying dead in the trenches on the hillside.

No doubt this would seem unmaidenly conduct in the eyes of school girls, but, you see, Marie had never been to school. She could only with difficulty spell out her Bible, was quite uncultured, and a very simple and natural product of the veld, possessed with all the primitive passions of love and hate and jealousy and revenge.

The trenches were reached from the rear of the army, with only the rocky difficulties of the kopje to overcome. When, however, they came near to them, the Kaffir shook with fear as the great shells came shrieking from the British guns to plunge into the earthen breastworks or burst close by, scattering horror.

He cowered in the cart, but Marie sat erect, although her face was white, and her lips drawn in.

They halted some distance away in the shelter of a

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great rock, and Oom Kris himself carried his dead boy to the cart. Poor old patriot—he was weeping, but he could not leave his place to accompany Hendrick's remains, anxious though he was that they should be buried at home near the old farm, and not in the dreadful trenches, perhaps by British hands.

He dispatched the Kaffir's cart, and expressed no surprise when Marie followed him, on hands and knees, creeping to Hendrick's place.

"It is right, little Marie," he said simply. "He loved you, my Hendrick. Say a prayer and aim carefully."

On the Boer girl's other side lay the veld-cornet. He nodded to Marie and smiled approval.

"Who shall conquer us?" he said, "when our girls are ready to die to defend the land? Why did not Greta and Anna come? They are fair shots, and Hendrick was their brother."

Marie said nothing, but colour came back to her cheek for it was the first time the prince of the veld had spoken to her so cordially.

She grew warm with the fierce excitement of the thing, but her aim was steady and her bullets sped truly. Rick was earnest in his encouragement.

"I did not know," he said, enthusiastically, "that you were such a brave girl, and capital shot. You were always so quiet."

Then Marie, even in the middle of horrors, was almost happy.

All the afternoon the shells came shrieking. All the afternoon cries and groans and hoarse commands filled her ears, with the ceaseless crash of the rifles, and the thunder of the big guns.

Then, along the line of the trench the deep voices would rise to heaven—now in the heart-stirring melody of a volkslied, now chanting the solemn measures of a psalm.

At last, when the day was far spent, the enemy tried new tactics, since their artillery could not disperse the Boers in the trenches. From far in front a body of kilted Highlanders moved forward with a great cheer, and the shells came plunging down in a more furious storm than ever.

One of these burst near Marie. A piece tore past her face, and hit old Oom Kris. The fine old man's rifle fell from his hands. He gave one short, sharp cry, and fell back. He had followed his dear son.

So hot was the fight, so urgent it was that now if ever the Boers should not slacken their fire, that little Marie could only murmur a prayer, but dared not cease firing. Rick Hausmann found time to touch her hand and whisper in sympathy.

"It was for God and country," said he. "It is well with him."

Tears were in Marie's eyes as she looked at him gratefully.

"For God and country," she repeated, and turned steadily to the approaching rush of Highlanders.

They were coming on with tremendous dash, not cheering now, for every breath was needed as they faced the steep hill. With fixed bayonets they came on and on and on.

The fire of the Boers was furious, a continual roar of volleying rifles. The Scotsmen suffered cruelly. Here, there, like twigs in the wind, men wavered and dropped, but the rest came on and on and on.

At sight of the cold steel, glancing in the sun, Marie began to quake. Not she alone; the Boers all round were paling.

"Cornet Hausmann," Marie cried, quivering, "I must go—I must fly. I cannot stand and face those—things!"

Hausmann looked up to speak and then another shell burst and he fell with a broken leg. At the same instant many Boers, unaccustomed to face such a weapon, began to fall back, leave the trench, and retreat.

Hausmann saw them, and, in spite of his agony, ordered and implored them to stay.

"Stand firm!" he cried; "they are exhausted. Stand firm—continue firing and we'll drive them back yet. Oh, cowards, will you fly! Marie, show them an example. You are no coward. Steady, Marie! Keep on firing! You won't desert me, will you?"

Marie's strength was renewed. Even her awful dread vanished at the prince's entreaty.

She stood beside him as he reached up to her hand.

"No," she said, "I forgot for one moment. No, I will not desert you."

Now the Scots were within a hundred yards. They came on, but they were staggering and gasping.

"Firm! Stand firm!" cried the wounded Boer chief to the Boers who had not fled.

"Rush them, lads!" roared a tall British officer.

They came. Marie covered that officer steadily. He fell, as she fired, but his men came on and on.

Their bayonets were within fifty yards, and the Boers without any such weapon to meet them, broke at last and scattered.

Marie looked down at the cornet. He had fainted from pain. With a great effort she lifted him up, for she was strong with much outdoor work, and staggered with him from the lost trenches to the shelter of the great rock, which had previously hid the cart.

Behind the rock Marie gave the cornet water and eased his agony as best she could, while waiting for the surgeon and ambulance.

Hausmann's eyes were always on her face.

"Marie," he said at last, "these fellows would have killed me if you had not stayed by me. You saved my life when you did not desert me like the others. Marie, little Marie, Oom Kris has gone and Hendrick has gone and you are alone. I, too, am alone. Stay with me then—never desert me!"

And she never did.

P. Y. Black.

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In the Orchard.

FEDORA, in her long white apron and big sun hat, colour-box and palette in hand, sauntered out into the orchard and sat down under the shade of an apple tree.

A light breeze stirred the boughs on which the sunlight gleamed in great gold patches and countless songbirds darted from limb to limb, making the air vocal with their music.

One plump red-breasted fellow perched himself directly in front of Fedora, and with head on one side regarded her intently.

The girl returned his gaze, first with amusement, then with interest, and finally with sudden inspiration.

She selected a crayon from her box and dexterously jotted down a few outlines. Then she consulted the bright bits of colour she had placed on her palette, and with a sweep here and there of her long paint brush transferred the nucleus of her small feathered observer to a sketch card.

She held it up to the light and looked at it critically for a moment, then laid it on the long grass beside her and leant back against the trunk of the tree, her hands crossed loosely behind her head, her eyes resting in dreamy contemplation on the gleaming fields beyond. Above her the faint rustling of the wind in the leaves drowned the silence.

Presently a shadow cut across the glimmering sunlight. Fedora glanced up and a faint colour tinged her cheeks. It was the professor.

"If you are too busy—" he began, looking down at her a little dubiously.

"Oh, no," she broke in quickly, smiling up at him as she spoke, "I am never busy."

Fedora prided herself upon that accomplishment.

"Do sit down," she went on, with a bright look, pointing to the grassy plot opposite her.

The professor hesitated for a moment, then suddenly complied with the request.

"A nice day," he remarked, carelessly, as he sat down.

"Charming," returned Fedora, surveying him with a smile.

It had suddenly dawned upon her that the professor was a singularly good-looking man to be so old—almost forty. And in spite of his two-score years she found herself looking with approval—almost admiration into his deep, clear eyes, above which the thick masses of brown hair waved back from an intellectual forehead. (All professors have intellectual foreheads.)

"I don't like to interrupt you," he said, with a doubtful glance at the incipient sketch and Fedora's small paint-stained fingers, "but there is something I wanted to say," he went on, tugging at his watch chain.

"Really!"

She gave a little cough and turned her eyes expectantly upon him.

"It's—it's important," faltered the professor, awkwardly, meeting her gaze.

Fedora broke into a little soft laugh and two dimples came into her face.

"What's the matter?" he said looking at her in astonishment, a suspicion arising in his mind that he was being treated with unnecessary levity.

"You looked so—serious," she replied, with such a charming little grimace and a look so profoundly innocent that the professor immediately dismissed this suspicion as unworthy.

"If you don't mind, though," he pursued, a little uneasily, his eyes on her face, "I would rather you would not—that you would be a little serious."

"Yes, certainly," assented Fedora with alacrity, pulling a straight face, but with a glimmer of a smile showing about her mouth.

He looked at her searchingly for a moment, then cleared his throat and went on with slight hesitation:

"I have a proposition."

He stopped short and looked at her in a helpless sort of way.

"Ah, I see," she exclaimed, with a merry laugh, "and you want the—hypothesis."

"Precisely so," returned the professor, his face brightening. He thought that his task would not be a difficult one, with such an appreciative young woman.

"And now to the point——" he continued, giving her a serious look.

"A point indicates mere position, and has no magnitude," interposed Fedora, flippantly.

"I suppose not," replied the professor, with slight sternness. "But it is not a problem in geometry—this time," he concluded, the glint of a smile hovering about his lips, his voice calm and meaning.

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl with wide eyes, as she folded both hands in her lap and fixed upon him a look of grave attention.

He shifted his position a little, pulled at a tuft of grass, then looked across at her with sudden resolution and spoke:

"Suppose—that a—man——"

The professor stopped short and cleared his throat again in a disconcerted sort of way. Fedora met his gaze with a mischievous smile, and chewed the end of her long paint brush.

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"Well?" she said dropping her chin into one small hand.

"That a man is——"

"Yes?"

"Well—in love, you know," he blurted out in desperation, blushing to the brim of his scholarly hat.

Fedora's face was suffused with sudden colour and she gave an inarticulate little murmur, quite beyond interpretation.

There was an interval, during which neither spoke, for several minutes. The professor was the first to break the pause:

"Madly, terribly, foolishly—in love," he said, emphasizing the last adverb, as though it included the sum total of human imbecility.

Fedora shot at him a glance of bewilderment.

"To think," she said, making a mental observation, "that he could be so violent."

There was another pause. She dug one dainty hand into the soft turf and looked at him shyly out of the corner of her eye. The professor spoke again.

"What do you think of it?" he asked abruptly, his gaze resting upon her face with suppressed eagerness.

"I—don't—know." She said it slowly and blushed as she spoke.

A mingled expression of doubt and perplexity became visible on the professor's face, as he waited for her to go on.

But Fedora remained silent, her eyes resting dreamily upon a little white cloud, drifting across the horizon.

The situation was growing awkward. The professor felt that his grasp was slipping away from him, and went on a little anxiously:

"You know about such things—girls generally do. Tell me—what shall I do?"

He toyed nervously with a dead twig as he spoke, and searched her face narrowly for encouragement.

Fedora reflected for a moment, then nodded with decision.

"It depends," she said dryly, fixing her eyes upon his with a serious look.

"Yes?"

The professor turned to her with a quick smile.

Fedora pondered again, then dropped her eyes half-timidly and twisted the corner of her handkerchief.

"On—the other one, you know—the girl," she went on with a soft blush.

The professor gazed at her in silence, his kind eyes full of perplexity.

"Does she—care for you?" asked Fedora in a low voice, looking away.

"That's precisely the point," said he, pushing back his hat. "I want to find out."

"Is she pretty?"

"Beautiful," replied the professor, with sudden enthusiasm. "She has the most magnificent brown eyes in the world, and hair—how do they say in novels?—like spun gold, that's it," he concluded, impulsively, his eyes aglow.

Fedora's cerulean orbs were suddenly misty and her dusky brown head averted.

There was silence for a few moments. After a little she leant forward to pick a flower, her heart throbbing violently and the colour faded from her face.

The professor drew a long breath and sighed.

"She doesn't give me any encouragement," he ventured, regarding her with a questioning, half-wistful look.

"Perhaps," said Fedora, faintly, as if to herself, "she cares for someone else."

The professor stared at her in consternation.

"I never—thought—of that," he said slowly, dismay stealing into his tones, as his eyes sought hers with an intense look, as though searching her inmost soul.

The pause that followed was unbroken for some moments.

Finally he spoke.

"I hope you have not made a mistake," he said, rising to go, "because it means so much to me—everything."

He was looking down upon her and there was something in his eyes she had never seen there before.

"There is only one way—to find out," she said, speaking heroically, but with a dreary little smile.

The professor's face brightened.

"Well?" said he, almost holding his breath.

The girl did not immediately reply, something seemed to clutch at her throat.

Presently she lifted her eyes—suspiciously bright—to his and said slowly, her voice half tremulous:

"Just tell her—in a straightforward, manly way, that you—love—her, and want a—serious answer."

She dropped her eyes suddenly, as she encountered his look—not easy to evade.

There was an inaudible stillness. Fedora was looking away like one in a dream, her hands lying cold and passive in her lap.

The sunshine circled about her red-brown hair in a shimmering rainbow.

The professor looked across at her, his eyes full of unexpected admiration, his hands knitted close together.

After a while he leant suddenly towards her and with a quick movement seized both her hands in his own.

"Fedora, I love you! Will you marry me?"

The girl gave him a swift, startled glance, and the colour flamed to her cheeks, while the tears and smiles struggled for mastery.

"But—but my hair is not gold." she exclaimed with a puzzled little laugh, looking shyly at him, "and my eyes are—blue."

"And mine," said he, taking her in his arms, "are colour-blind."

SAN. FEW.

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NEW SERIAL STORY.

A ROMANCE OF LAND AND SEA.

By WILLIAM WESTALL.

Author of "With the Red Eagle," "The Phantom City," "Nigel Fortescue," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

Major Wyvenhoe leaves England on the *Campanella* with a detachment of troops, raised by Major Barnish, to help the Venezuelans in their struggle for liberty. Major Barnish is accompanied on the vessel by his wife. At Cork a detachment of Irishmen is taken on board together with General Molyneux, who is connected with the Venezuelan Army, his secretary and chaplain. When the vessel has been out a few days Major Barnish meets with a fatal accident, and on that same day a mutiny breaks out among the troops, but it is speedily quelled. On the day of Barnish's death a sail is sighted, and the vessel proves to be the *Dulcinea*, a Spanish warship. The *Campanella* is ordered to stop so that her cargo may be examined. The captain (Cautley) objects, and while negotiations are going on, the *Dulcinea* is boarded by a party from the *Campanella*, when the guns are spiked and the vessel put out of working order. General Molyneux, who had come with the party unasked, kills a Spanish sailor, and is left with the Spaniards as a prisoner.

CHAPTER V.

The Venezuelan Coast is Reached.

I KEPT an eye on the *Dulcinea*, as Cautley had suggested, not from any morbid desire to see Molyneux hanged, simply to ascertain whether he was hanged. But my curiosity had to remain unsatisfied, for though I watched until the man-of-war became a mere speck I saw nothing.

"I thought they would run him up to the yard-arm right away," said the skipper, "but they are perhaps too busy putting the ship to rights, or Molyneux may be trying to save his life by making revelations, bogus and otherwise."

"What revelations could he make?"

"Well, he knows all about the formation of a British legion, when the expedition will sail, of how many ships it will be composed, and for what port they are destined."

"And the Spaniards may send a squadron to intercept them. Would it not have been better to bring Molyneux with us?"

"In one respect, perhaps, though, as the Spanish Government has spies in London, I doubt whether he can tell Don Pablo much that he does not already know, and it was not only the right thing to do but the only way of purging ourselves of complicity in the crime."

"But we are not responsible for Molyneux, he was neither under your orders nor mine."

"I am afraid we are though, if only because we did not bundle him back the moment he appeared on the *Dulcinea's* deck. I don't think our boarding her, under the circumstances, was an act of piracy, but it was undoubtedly illegal, and when people engage in an unlawful enterprise, and one of them commits a crime—murder, for instance—they all participate technically in his guilt. And you heard what Don Pablo said about making it an international question. That means a garbled and exaggerated report to our Government. Anyhow, I shall be chary of returning to England, or landing in any British colony, until the matter has blown over; and one thing is sure, if we fall into the hands of the Spaniards they will make short work of us."

"They will do that in any case, if it be true that they give no quarter. That would be the fortune of war—all in the day's work—but I should decidedly object to being indicted for piracy and murder."

"Well, perhaps my apprehensions are rather far fetched, and I don't think our people will give much heed to Spanish complaints, their sympathies are all with the Venezuelans. Besides, things are soon forgotten, and we have a deal to go through before we see England again."

And so we had—a great deal more than we knew.

"Would you mind seeing Mrs. Barnish, and telling her?" said the skipper presently.

"Very well; but suppose she objects?"

"Say it is a rule of the sea—anything you like; only it must be to-night."

So I went to Mrs. Barnish's cabin, and found her lying on a couch, her face pale and troubled, her eyes red with weeping; but on seeing me she roused herself and inquired what all the commotion had been about. On which I told her how great had been our peril, and how Captain Cautley had saved the ship.

"But for his boldness and address," I added, "we should have lost everything."

"For which I thank him with all my heart," she said earnestly. "You also, Major Wyvenhoe, for, though you say nothing about yourself, I am sure you were as bold as he. I thank you for your kindness and devotion, which I shall never forget."

Then briefly, and I fear too bluntly, I delivered my message.

"So soon! So soon! Only this morning; Heavens! what shall I do?" she cried wildly, sobbing as though her heart would break.

As soon as the poor lady had composed herself, which she did by a great effort, she said that, feeling sure we would

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act for the best, she left it to Captain Cautley and myself, then added:

"As it must be it had perhaps better be soon."

We buried our late commander an hour after sunset by light of moon, with military honours and all the pomp and ceremony meet for the occasion. The troops and the ship's company were paraded on deck, with arms reversed, the officers in full uniform with crape on their swords. Cautley read the service for those buried at sea, and then the body, inclosed in a heavily-weighted coffin, was committed to the deep "in the sure and certain hope of resurrection."

It was the first funeral at sea in which I had taken part, and it impressed me, and I think most of us, both deeply and painfully. For Barnish, who had been much beloved, would be greatly missed, his death was a veritable calamity, and augured ill for the happy termination of a voyage so auspiciously begun.

But, whatever befalls, work must be done and duties performed, and on the following day an informal court of inquiry was appointed to investigate the causes and origin of the mutiny and apportion the guilt. More we could not do, having neither legal right to try the prisoners nor the means of enforcing any sentence we might pass on them, except a term of imprisonment that would end with the voyage, or death, which we had no right to inflict.

But the mutineers did not know this, they were afraid of being hanged, and several of the ringleaders were clamorous to save their lives by betraying their friends. Of those whom we called as witnesses, some denied everything, others lied first and prevaricated afterwards; very few, I imagine, told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The only absolutely contumacious witness was the one who knew the most—Conroy, the private secretary. When asked a question, he looked as stupid as though he had been deaf and dumb, and said never a word.

Cautley, however, was not to be baulked, and found a way of loosening the fellow's tongue, which reminded me, with a difference, of the *peine forte et dure* which not very long ago used to be inflicted on accused persons in England who refused to plead. A rope being fastened round Conroy's body, he was cast into the sea and dragged at the ship's stern.

"As soon as you have made up your mind to speak, you have only to raise your hand or sing out 'yes,'" said Cautley; "and if the sharks make a meal of you, you will have nobody to blame but yourself."

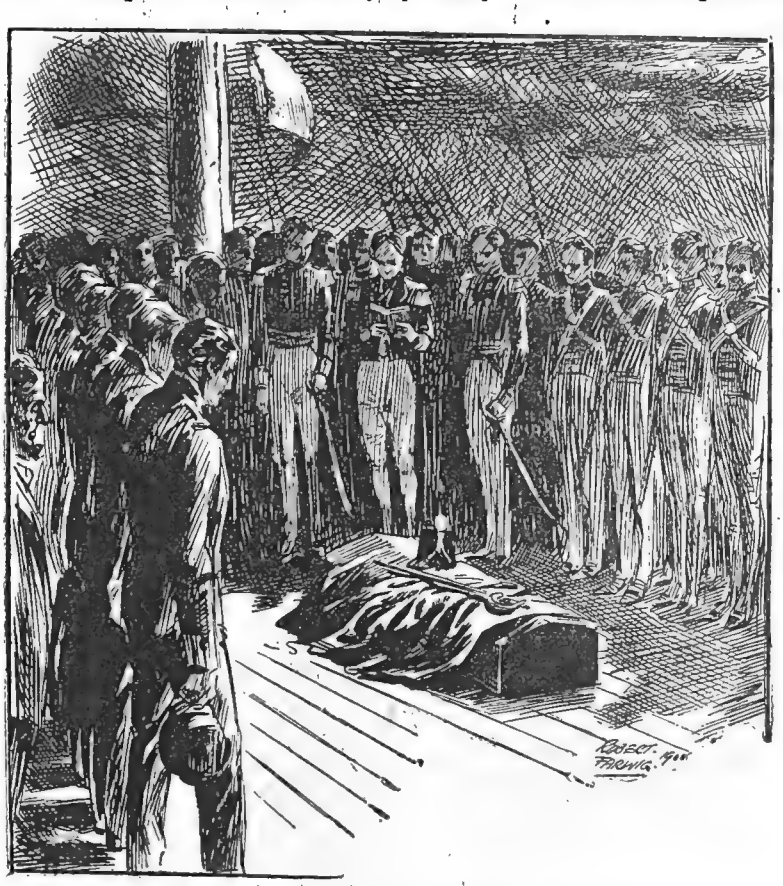
Conroy was very obdurate, and before he was thrown overboard showed no sign of yielding, but five minutes in and under the water, mostly under, with the prospect of serving as bait for a shark, brought him to reason. He gave token of submission, and was hauled on board, more dead than alive, and so exhausted withal as to be physically unable to speak until he had swallowed a stiff glass of grog.

Had I not been assured that Conroy was an arrant rascal I should have interfered in his favor, but as Cautley observed afterwards it was probably the only punishment he would get, and far less than he deserved.

Nevertheless, we were unable to extort a full confession from him, he would only answer questions, but his admissions, together with the evidence of the other plotters, disclosed all the essential facts.

As John Ready had surmised, Molyneux was at the bottom of it all. Most of his eccentricities were put on in order to give us a mean idea of his capacity, whether for mischief or aught else. The two subalterns and several of the non-commissioned officers and men who had joined at Cork were his creatures, Conroy his factotum and *alter ego*. Their purpose, after gaining over as many of the men as they could, was to destroy the officers and all who took their part, sail to Pampatar, sell the ship and her cargo to the Venezuelans and share the proceeds. This, in addition to a large sum in silver and gold, which, as Conroy asserted, Major Barnish had with him, his wife's jewellery and whatever cash and valuables the mutineers might find on the persons of the officers or among their effects, amounting to several thousand pounds. The ordering of everything, including the command of the troops was to be taken by Molyneux, who would pretend that they were the first contingent of an Irish brigade which he was raising for service in Venezuela and claim the bounties and cost of their equipment. He proposed, in fact, to step into the Barnishs' shoes, which necessarily implied the previous removal both of the major and his wife.

The details of this scheme were imparted only to the initiated, but some of them oozed out in a more or less incomplete shape and reached me through Ready, and Cautley through the boatswain. Sedition was sown among those not in the mutiny by Conroy and the other conspirators,



We buried our late commander an hour after sunset.

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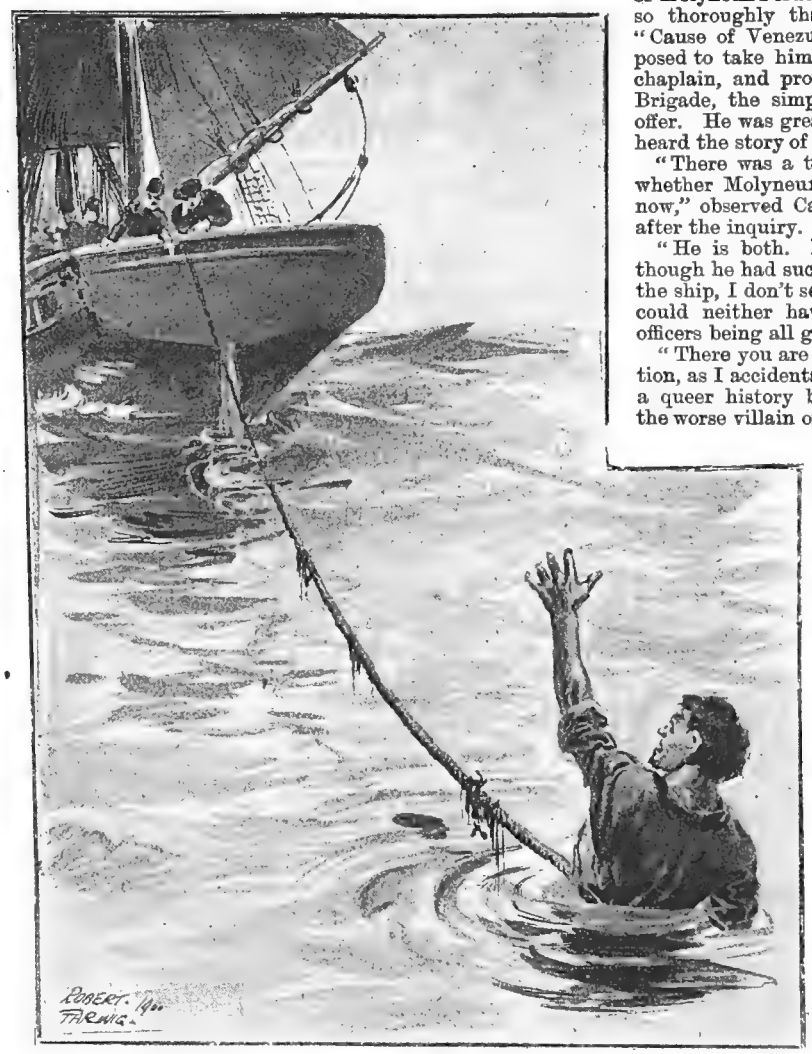

He gave token of submission.

chiefly by Conroy. It was he who had told them they were under no obligation to obey their officers, and suggested that the men were by no means sure of receiving the remainder of their bounties. Moreover, it was rumoured, and by many of the more ignorant believed, that the ship's true destination was not Pampatar, but St. Jago de Cuba, where Major Barnish meant to sell them all to the Spaniards to work in chains on sugar plantations.

All was ripe for a rising, and but for the removal of the arms and the Major's death, it might have succeeded. The latter event both precipitated a crisis and led to dissensions among the conspirators. Some of them, thinking that all authority had disappeared with the chief, wanted to mutiny at once, others wanted to wait a while longer, the unruly section got out of hand, a good many of them got drunk, with the result that instead of a massacre by night, as had been planned, there was an outbreak by day, which was suppressed as we have seen.

Father Bartrum, who had been sea sick in his cabin the greater part of the voyage knew nothing either of the plot or Molyneux's true character. He believed in the scoundrel so thoroughly that he had given him money for the "Cause of Venezuelan Liberty," and when Molyneux proposed to take him out to the Spanish Main as his private chaplain, and promised him the chaplaincy of the Irish Brigade, the simple-minded priest eagerly embraced the offer. He was greatly distressed, poor gentleman, when he heard the story of his patron's villainy.

"There was a time when we were unable to determine whether Molyneux was more fool than knave. We know now," observed Cautley, as we were talking matters over after the inquiry.

"He is both. Knaves generally are," I said. "Even though he had succeeded in cutting our throats and taking the ship, I don't see how it could have profited him. He could neither have controlled the men, nor, the ship's officers being all gone, could he have navigated the ship."

"There you are mistaken. Conroy understands navigation, as I accidentally discovered some time since. He has a queer history behind him, and is, in my opinion, quite the worse villain of the two."

"I wonder whether the Spaniards hanged Molyneux? If they did not do it quickly, he would stand a good chance of saving his neck. The rogue can talk the thatch off a hay-stack, and is quite capable of representing himself as a lord or a British general, so that Don Pablo, believing he has caught a big fish, may think it more to his advantage to keep him than string him up. It will be queer if he turns up again. If he does, I know somebody who will have a little account to settle with him."

"So do I; but we shall never have the chance. Even if the Spaniards do not hang him, they will take good care not to let him go."

We were now in the Caribbean Archipelago, enjoying perfect weather and feasting our eyes on the finest scenery I had ever beheld or imagined could exist. It was like an enchanted sea. We were seldom out of sight of land, isle succeeded isle, each more picturesque than the other, some mere rocks rising sheer from the waves, yet richly coloured and garlanded with flowers, palms, and foliage of every hue. Many were much larger, but all equally beautiful. I shall never forget my first sight of St. Kitts. The morning had been misty, but presently the sun, growing more powerful, dispersed the haze which had hidden the island, and revealed a mountain with a broad base and a tapering peak, sparkling with verdure, a glorious emerald set in an amethystine sea.

And Martinique, and Dominica, and Guadeloupe, and many more. To attempt to describe them were almost a desecration, even though I possessed a poet's pen, for no subtleties of language or combination of words could give an adequate idea of their splendour and their beauty.

Our misgivings and forebodings were for a while forgotten, we dwelt only in the present, and Mrs. Barnish, leaving the seclusion of her cabin, spent the greater part of her time on deck, under an awning, which Cautley had put up for her special benefit.

Though the reverse of sentimental, and in manner reserved, the skipper showed the poor lady much sympathy, and treated her with almost courtly deference, and we both, as well as the other officers, did our best to make the remainder of the voyage as pleasant for her as might be.

The skipper, however, surpassed us all, and before long

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I began to suspect that his intentions had a deeper source than loyalty to his owner and pity for beauty in distress. But Cautley was too manly and energetic, too conscientious as a man and too thorough as a seaman to let duty wait on dalliance. He displayed even greater activity and vigilance than before, and rightly so, for as we neared the Main his responsibilities increased, and only by good luck and incessant watchfulness could he hope to win through the dangers that still confronted us. One of these was falling in with another Spanish cruiser, possibly a second time with the *Dulcinea*, since, as Molyneux had almost certainly told the captain whither we were bound, he would probably try to intercept us, in which event, his ship being the better sailer, he might succeed, luck favouring him.

It was to avoid this peril that Cautley, instead of taking the more direct course by the Monas passage, between Costa Rica and St. Domingo, went by way of the Windward Islands, none of which belong to Spain. But in avoiding Scylla we were like to fall into Charybdis. By prolonging our voyage we gave the *Dulcinea* a chance of reaching the neighbourhood of Margarita in advance of the *Campanella*, and there lying in wait for us, perhaps with a consort.

Nor was this all. At the time we left England the latest news from Venezuela was two months old, and was now nearly four months old, an interval during which many things might have happened. We had no assurance that Margarita was still held by the patriots. Being only some twenty miles from the continent, and having a good harbour it was a highly valuable possession, much coveted by the Spaniards by whom, for aught we could tell, it had been recovered. In any event it were suicidal to go to Pampatar without making sure that it was occupied by friends—or anywhere else, for the same doubts applied to every port on the Venezuelan coast. One or two of them were in the hands of the enemy when we last heard, and the remainder, one or all, might be in a like predicament.

The alternative was to call at a neutral port, St. Thomas, Curacoa, or one of the Windward Islands, where the latest intelligence touching the fortunes of the war would be obtainable. But to this there was the serious objection that the *Campanella* might be attacked at the instance of some Spanish consul or fussy local official, and proceeded against in the courts on a charge of violating the neutrality laws, which, whatever were the result, would ruin Mrs. Barnish in costs and prevent her from fulfilling her husband's contract with the Venezuelan government.

"There is only one thing for it, we must act the man-of-war and stop any merchant ship or hooker hailing from the Main that we meet, and demand information," said Cautley, in the course of a conversation on the subject. "Then make for whatever port is in Venezuelan hands, or if Pampatar is blockaded without being occupied, get in either by stealth or force."

"And if we were attacked meanwhile?"

"Hoist the Venezuelan flag and fight. I won't court an encounter, but if I am fired on I shall fire back, strictly in self defence. It won't be quite regular, perhaps, yet no less so than our capture of the *Dulcinea*. In for a penny in for a pound, you know, and poor Mrs. Barnish and her interests must be our first consideration."

They were undoubtedly Cautley's first consideration, but as I rather liked the idea of a brush with a Spanish cruiser, I offered no objection, and preparations for the eventuality in question were straightway made.

By the removal of her poop the *Campanella* was reconverted into a flush-decked ship, the carronades were got up and mounted on their carriages, and the crew not being strong enough both to work the ship and fight her, a hundred picked men from among the troops were exercised every day on the quarter-deck.

Mrs. Barnish observed these proceedings with concern, yet without apprehension, warmly applauding the skipper's resolve to fight rather than fail.

"I am vastly beholden to you, Captain Cautley, I thank Heaven for providing me with so brave a protector, and as long as I live I shall be grateful for your kindness and devotion," she said, in her most winning manner.

"Don't mention it, madam, pray don't mention it," returned the skipper, hurriedly. "It is all in the way of duty, and I don't think there is a man on board, except perhaps those rascally mutineers, who would not lay down his life for you with the greatest pleasure."

Which made me smile. A man who can contemplate the possibility of being riddled with bullets or having his head knocked off by a cannon ball with pleasure, must be far gone indeed. But I was not the least jealous, since, though I admired Mrs. Barnish as much as I pitied her, it was in no sense the pity which is akin to love. A little flirtation I did not mind, but to the tender passion *au serieux* I was absolutely impervious.

Owing to light winds and occasional calms we were making rather a long voyage of it, but we kept moving more or less slowly, and the time arrived when it became necessary for the skipper to make up his mind as to our destination, to which end he one day bore up to a felucca which was sailing nor'-east by east, hoisted the Union Jack, and fired a shot across her bows as a hint to her to pass within hail, which she did, and hove-to; whereupon Cautley took up his speaking trumpet and put the usual questions, but, being answered in Spanish, he gave me the trumpet and told me what to say.

"Whence are you and whither bound?"

"From Carupano to St. Thomas."

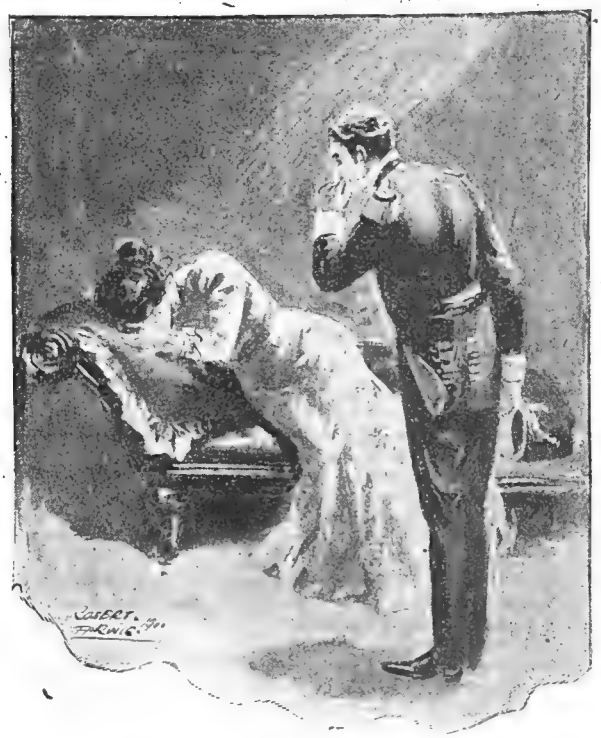
"Who are in possession of Carupano—patriots or royalists?"

"Patriots; but, being a small unfortified place with no harbour, it is not of much account."

"And Cumana?"

"Cumana is held in force by the Spaniards, also Barcelona."

"And Margarita?"



"Don't mention it, madam; pray, don't mention it."

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"Cannot say for certain, the last news was that General Arismendez was still at Pampatar, but it was rumoured that General Morillo was preparing another expedition."

"To attack Pampatar?"

"Yes, and two Spanish sloops of war are continually cruising along the coast between Cumana and Pampatar."

"You are on the patriot side yourselves?"

"*Si*, Señor, very much so."

"So are we. Proof of which is that we are taking British troops to Margarita to serve against the Spaniards, and if you can give us any information likely to be useful we shall be greatly obliged."

"Well, look out for the sloops, they are large, as large as your ship, and heavily armed, carrying twenty-four guns apiece. You can tell them by their rig, they have jib-shaped foresails, short, standing bowsprits, and no topsails. If you see either of them at anchor off Pampatar, you will know that the Spaniards are back again, though, as the harbour is defended by a strong fort, and General Arismendez is in command, I do not think that is likely."

"Thank you. Have you anybody on board who could pilot us into Pampatar? He would be well paid."

"Only myself, señor, and being the master with a crew of but two men and a boy, who know nothing of navigation, I cannot be spared, otherwise, I should put myself at your worship's disposal."

Whereupon, after an exchange of compliments, the felucca went her way and we went ours.

"I beg pardon, Captain Cautley, for intruding on you at such a moment, but with your kind permission I should like to ask a question and make a suggestion," put in Father Bartrum, who had lately come on deck. He had suffered much from sea sickness and looked like the ghost of his former self. His high colour was gone, his cheeks had fallen in, his paunch collapsed, but he had abated little or nothing of his old pomposity of language and manner.

"By all means, father," answered the skipper pleasantly.

"By all means, father," answered the skipper pleasantly. "What is the question?"

"Well, sir, unless I have misunderstood the conversation which has just taken place between yourself and the captain of the small sailing boat which has just left us, as interpreted by Major Wyvenhoe, you have some apprehension of coming in hostile contact with one or other of these heavily-armed sloops?"

"Or both?"

"Or both. I stand corrected, sir. In which event there may be fighting, slaughter, and—danger?"

"Well, when ships of war come into hostile contact, as you call it, there generally is something of the sort, I think," quoth Cautley, with an amused smile.

"Not that I am afraid—not in the least, and if a hostile contact occurs, I shall do my duty. I shall descend into the cockpit, and offer the consolations of religion to such of the wounded as are willing to receive my ministrations."

"And quite right, too; the cockpit is the place for you. And now about the suggestion?"

"Well, sir, it struck me while listening to the conversation to which I have just alluded, that a mariner or navigator, conversant with the coast we are approaching and the islands thereto adjacent would be very useful at this juncture."

"Rather. I only wish we had one here."

"So you have, my dear sir, so you have."

"The dickens we have. Who is he?"

"His name is Daniel Conroy, and he is now below in irons."

"Ah! I guessed he was an old salt, but it did not occur to me that he might know these seas."

"He does indeed, sir. It was for that, and for his knowledge of Spanish, that the scoundrel who so grossly deceived me engaged Conroy, nominally as his secretary, really to navigate the *Campanella* after we others had been relegated to another sphere."

"We others! Surely Molyneux would not have hurt you?"

"I fear he would. He owes me money, and was aware that I had provided myself with a few British sovereigns, for use in the event of my appointment as chaplain to the Irish brigade being accidentally delayed. Unless I am very much mistaken, it was in order to get rid of me that I was invited to accompany him."

"He is bad enough for anything, there is no doubt of that. So think you Conroy could pilot us to Pampatar?"

"Yes, sir, or any other port in these seas."

"Have you any idea how he acquired his knowledge; in what capacity I mean?"

"As to that my lips are sealed."

"I understand, a secret of the confessional. Well, his past is no affair of mine. On what terms do you suppose I can secure his services?"

"You had better ask him. But I think he will want to be relieved of his fetters, and a promise that you will set him free, and make no charge against him on the termination of the voyage."

"There is nothing like time present. I will go and see the rascal now. Greatly obliged for your suggestion, father; it may prove very useful."

An hour later Cautley came into my cabin. "It is all settled," he said, "conditions as suggested by the pater, with the addition of a sum of money."

"A sum of money?"

"Yes, he would not treat on any other terms. Only a

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hundred dollars, though. And he may be of immense use to us, knows every nook and rock and islet in the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. I have not the least doubt he has been in the black trade, and I told him plainly that if he played any tricks I would run him up to the yard-arm, and he saw that I meant it. But, as he said, it would not be worth his while, and it is as much in his interest as ours to get the ship safely to Pampatar."

"How are you going to do it? Have you a plan?"

"Yes, and a very promising one. Conroy thinks, and I am disposed to agree with him, that these sloops are looking out for us. The *Dulcinea* may easily have called at Cumana and given notice of our coming."

"In that case why does she not try to intercept us herself?"

"She may be on special service, or bound for some port further west, and two sloops are more likely to stop and capture us than one frigate. We shall, of course, try to obtain more precise information; but in the meantime I assume two things—that Margarita is still in Venezuelan hands, and that the sloops are on the watch for us."

And then Cautley described his plan, which, divested of technicalities and omitting minor details, was as follows:

Pampatar is at the south-east corner of Margarita, and the skipper had intended, after running past the island, to approach it from the south-west. But, as Conroy pointed out, this would bring him dangerously near Cumana, and was exactly the course which the sloops would expect him to take, and suggested that a better way would be to 'bout ship and make a long fetch, then turn again, steer for the north-east corner of the island, and let go in a cove, doubtless an old pirate haunt, known to Conroy, where the brig could not be seen, even from a ship passing close by. Here we should be able to ascertain the state of things at Pampatar, and unless we heard that the patriots had been ousted might slip out by night and gain our point unperceived by the sloops.

"Anyhow, as only one is likely to be in shore we shall not have to deal with both at once," observed the skipper. "That is all I dare about, and being in Venezuelan waters I shall not wait to be attacked; if I get a chance I shall strike first and hard."

"Very well, only I don't like having to put so much trust in Conroy."

"Neither do I, but needs must when the devil drives. I shall change our course at once."

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT NEGROES.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Master Key," by Florence Warden, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. Alfred Hindley, 60 Everton Road, Liverpool. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT VENTRILOQUISM, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, July 30th. Post-cards only, please.

Not Quite the Style.

AN Englishman visited an American friend who had an estate in the South and employed a large number of negroes, who were treated with great kindness, but could not keep their hands from picking and stealing.

The visitor attended their Sunday service, after which the negro preacher asked him how he liked the sermon.

The reply was complimentary, and Sambo grinned. Then came the remark:

"I should think you should preach to your people on the sinfulness of theft—stealing fowls and eggs."

Sambo's face became gloomy, and he rejoined:

"Well, sah, I hab tried dat style, but somehow or oder, it allus seemed to trow a kind ob coolness ober de meeting." A. H.

Negro Logic.

A GENTLEMAN riding through Virginia was overtaken by a violent thunderstorm.

He took shelter in a negro's cabin, and found the water streaming through many crevices in the roof.

"Why don't you mend your roof, Cuff?" he asked.

"Oh, um rain so, massa, can't," said the negro.

"But why don't you mend it when it doesn't rain?" asked the gentleman.

"Yah, massa," said the negro with a grin, "den um dohn want mendin'." F. J.

In Court.

"WHAT!" exclaimed the justice to a coloured culprit, "have you the audacity to say you do not recognise this pocket-book?"

"Yes, sah."

"But it was found in your possession."

"In my what did yer say, jedge?"

"In your possession. This pocket-book was found in your pocket, sir."

"Jedge, you has tole two stories about dat 'ar. Fust you said hit was foun' in my persession, and den yer 'lowed hit was foun' in my pocket. Bofe dem yarns can't be true. Ef de jedges can't tell the troof, hits no wonder dat a poor niggah like me got led astray."

The justice drew a long breath, and once more producing the pocket-book said:

"You denied just now that you had ever seen this book. I now ask you again, did you ever see this pocket-book before?"

"Why, of course. Hit am de same one yer showed me a minit ago. Yer must be losing yer mind, jedge."

Remanded to gaol without bail. F. W.

Only a Dream.

THE squire, hearing a noise in the night, came downstairs and found Black Pete in his fowl-house.

"Pete, you rascal, what are you doing here?" he exclaimed.

"It's all right, sah," replied Pete; "it's owing to a dream that I'm here, sah."

"A dream, you black thief! What do you mean?"

"Well, sah, I dreamt I was goin' to have chicken tomorrow; but I'm 'fraid 'taint true, sah!" E. C.

Would it Stand the Strain?

OUT in the West a dusky negro knight of the lather and brush was performing the operation of shaving a customer with a very dull razor.

"Stop!" said the customer; "that won't do."

"What's de matter, boss?"

"The razor pulls."

"Well, no matter for dat, sah. If de handle ob de razor don't break, the beard's bound to come off."

J. E.

Where He Was.

"IF you are innocent," said the lawyer to his client, an old negro, who was charged with stealing a ham, "we ought to be able to prove an alibi."

"I don't 'specs we kin," the darkie replied doubtfully.

"At what time was the ham stolen?"

"'Bout lebben o'clock, dey say."

"Well, where were you between that and midnight. In bed?"

"No, sah, I wah hidin' de ham."

L. J.

"Sufficient!"

A SCOTSMAN and a negro had a dispute, and to find out which was the best man they agreed to fight it out with their fists, and the one who had enough first was to shout out the word "sufficient."

Both men went at each other as hard as they could. The negro got one eye shut up, his lip swollen, and his nose twisted, but still, would not give in. Finally, when nearly exhausted, he managed to land his opponent between the eyes which fairly floored him.

"Sufficient!" shouted the Scot.

"Is that so?" said the negro gasping for breath. "Sho—I've bin tryin' to tink ob dat word fer dis twenty minutes!" T. P. O.

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Beyond a Doubt.

"Once upon a time," said the storyteller to a group of interested listeners, "a little nigger sat at a table pounding his thumbnail with a hammer," and the story-teller screwed his face into grimaces expressive of recurring pain, while his hands went through the motions suggested by the story.

"Presently a man asked the darkie what he was doing that for.

"'Cause,' he whined, 'it feel so good when I stop.'"

C. W.

Where the Tablecloth was Kept.

When travelling in America, an Englishman was compelled by necessity to put up at a very inferior hotel, if it might be dignified with the name.

One night he went to bed rather early, but, to his surprise, long before daylight he heard a loud knocking at his door.

"You must get up, massa," said the darkey. "You must get up, Massa Russell."

"I don't want to get up," was the reply.

"But you must," continued the nigger; "some gentlemen are going away."

"Let them go away."

"But they want their breakfast."

"Let them have it."

"But they can't till you get up."

"Why?"

"Because you are sleeping on the tablecloth, and we want it," was the final and unanswerable reply.

Mr. Russell rose and gave the sheet he had been sleeping on to spread over the breakfast table.

O. S. S.

A Rolling Stone.

A negro working upon a plantation in Southern Virginia gave his master notice to leave. As he had been in his master's employ many years the master reasoned with him as to the advisability of making a change, winding up by saying:

"You know, Sambo, a rolling stone gathers no moss."

The negro replied:

"No, massa, that's quite true; he gathers no moss, but 'im gathers a heap of polish."

L. M. W.

Too Light-Toed.

The Kaffirs of South Africa have a bad reputation for being light-fingered, and a careful watch must be kept on them when they are near a camp, for they are very adroit in their thefts. While sitting down, apparently intent on idleness, they will purloin even the smallest article. In the following anecdote the Kaffir was not light-fingered, but light-toed—to his sorrow.

A gentleman travelling near the Modder River once stopped to have something repaired in his cart, and during the work the blacksmith threw a red-hot bolt on the ground to cool.

A Kaffir dexterously seized it between his toes in passing, intending to make off with it

It may be imagined how he screamed with pain when he discovered his mistake. The iron had become wedged so tightly between his toes that he could not release it with the aid of his fingers, and awful was the plight in which the thief rushed bellowing into a neighbouring pool of water.

How Sam Was Caught.

A Chicago lady was called away by a neighbour whilst making jam.

As she left the room she said to her negro servant:

"Sam, you old rascal, don't you eat my jam when I'm away."

Sam protested he would die first, but the whites of his eyes rolled hungrily towards the bubbling crimson.

"See here, Sam," the lady said, "I'll chalk your lips, and on my return I'll know if you have eaten any."

So saying she passed her forefinger over the darkey's thick lips, holding the chalk in the palm of her hand at the time, and not letting it touch him

When she came back she did not need to ask any questions, for Sam's lips were chalked a quarter of an inch thick.

J. C.

Doubling the Dose.

One day, in the streets of Port-au-Prince, an old negro who was vainly endeavouring to drag a lazy mule by his halter, suddenly stepped up to a doctor who stood outside his surgery, and offered him a silver piastre if he could put a little life into his contrary beast.

The doctor went into his office, and returned with his medicine case. He selected a small syringe, filled it with morphia, and inserted the needle into the animal's side.

The astonished creature reared upon his hind-legs, and then, with a tremendous bray, started down the road at a breakneck speed.

The old darkey looked first at the doctor, and then at the disappearing mule.

"Say, sah," he suddenly exclaimed, "how much was dat stuff wuf you jist put in dat mule?"

"Oh, about ten cents," laughingly answered the doctor.

"Well, sah, yo' jist fire twenty cents' wuf right into me. Heah am de cash. I'se got to ketch dat ar mule."

He Kissed the Judge.

In one of the New Orleans courts a negro was called as a witness. The judge, noted for austerity, held out the book and the witness was sworn, and, of course, expected to kiss the book. But the witness was unused to criminal proceedings.

"Why don't you kiss?" demanded the magistrate.

"Sar!"

"Ain't you going to kiss?" was the question again put.

"Sar!" repeated the astonished darkey.

"Kiss, I tell you!" thundered the judge.

"Yes, sir! yes, sar!" exclaimed the frightened and trembling darkey.

The long arms of the son of Ham were thrown round the judicial neck, and before he could be prevented a stentorian smack resounded through the court-room.

"Take him off—take him off!" cried the court, while the loud shouts of the spectators testified their appreciation of the fun. At last the half-strangled judge was rescued from the clasp of the very literal witness.

G. N.

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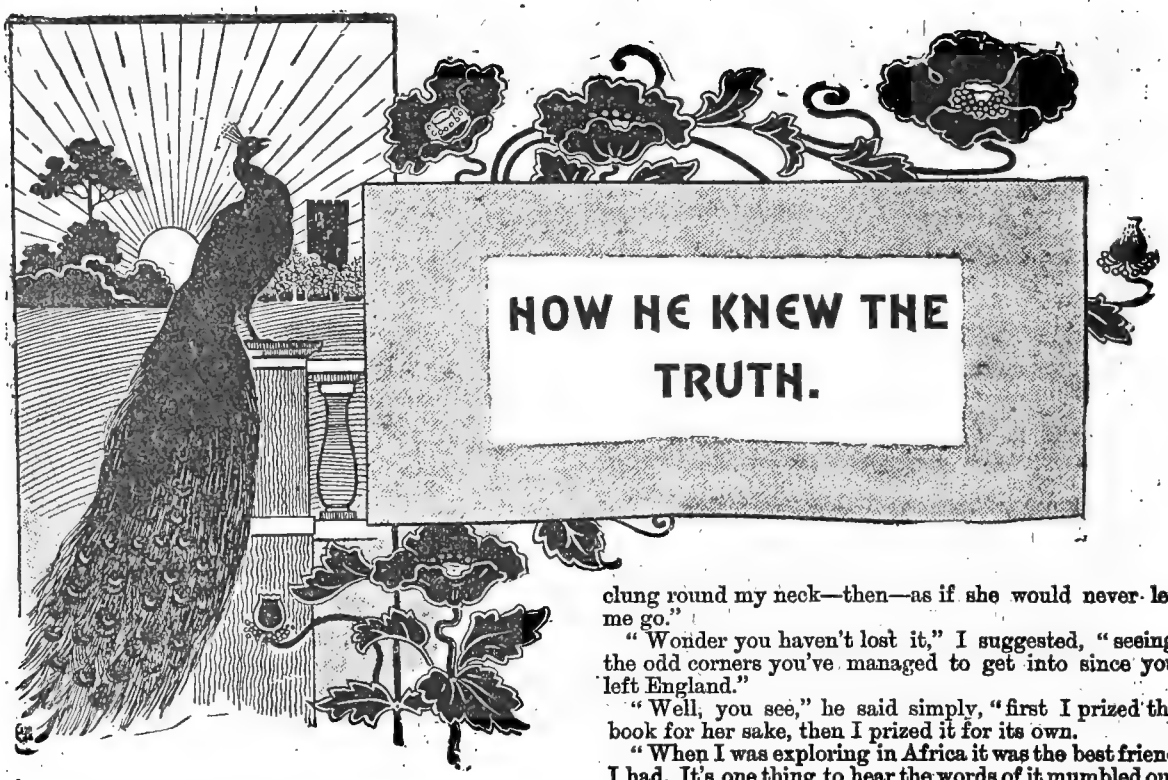

HOW HE KNEW THE TRUTH.

"I SHALL clear out of this."

"You won't."

"I will."

"Then I think you will do a very foolish thing. You haven't even put your chances to the test."

"Chances," he repeated with a bitter laugh. "Look here, old fellow, I've led a forlorn hope before to-day, and I've had enough of that sort of thing."

It was high noon in Thirlsby.

The summer lay like a mantle above the face of the cliffs and the meadows. The sea in the distance seemed asleep; nearer, its waters moved lazily in towards the shore, and sparkled as they broke on the land.

Gerald Graham and I sat on the edge of the bluff, and kicked down pebbles and tussocks of grass on to the beach below.

Despite the beauty of the day and the scene, my companion's brows were like midnight.

"No," he went on, "the sooner I accept the inevitable and make myself scarce the better."

"How is she to know your feelings if you don't tell her?" I remonstrated.

Again he gave the same exasperated laugh.

"Do you suppose you must spell out everything to a woman, or set it down in black and white before she understands? Why, man, every look of mine is a proposal, and she knows it."

He unbuttoned his Norfolk jacket, and took out a worn and frayed little Prayer Book from his inner pocket.

"Isabel Alston, Xmas, 1895," was written on the title page.

"She gave me this when I went away five years ago, and I've carried it about with me ever since. She was only a child," he said with a sigh, "not fifteen, and she clung round my neck—then—as if she would never let me go."

"Wonder you haven't lost it," I suggested, "seeing the odd corners you've managed to get into since you left England."

"Well, you see," he said simply, "first I prized the book for her sake, then I prized it for its own.

"When I was exploring in Africa it was the best friend I had. It's one thing to hear the words of it mumbled out by a curate in a hurry to get home to his dinner, and another to read them by yourself in the loneliness of an African forest, with no one but natives about you."

He paused for a minute, looking thoughtfully out to sea.

"You will hardly believe it," he resumed, "but when I was hit in the chest at Nicholson's Nek my first concern was not for myself, but for Isabel's Prayer Book.

"However, it's no use talking. She has no real regard for me, or else she is a heartless coquette. In either case I'm in a bad way."

He sat and mused a little longer, then suddenly leapt to his feet, his dark handsome face glowing with resolution.

"I'll go back if they will have me. My shoulder will be all right by the time we get to the Cape. Come on, Harry."

Reluctantly I rose to accompany him, and we made our way past the villas with lordly names, which garnished the edge of the cliff, to the quaint old post-office which stood in the centre of the village.

The postmistress took the telegram conveying the offer of Graham's services to his old chief, and read it.

"You're never thinking of going out again, Master Gerald," she cried, with the familiarity of an old friend, "and you so badly hurt and all."

"They want all the men they can get just now," he replied, as he opened his purse and counted out £2 15s., the cost of the cable. 'England expects that every man —' you know the rest, Mrs. Yallop."

"Where shall we go now, Harry?"

I suggested a favourite haunt of our boyhood, so we sculled across the river to a ruined abbey, which was

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huddled on the heights of a neighbouring hill. Here as lads we had often mused upon the dead and gone monks, and had peopled the ruins with lean ascetics, starving themselves into spiritual ecstacies, or with jovial personages like Friar Tuck of the Robin Hood romances.

A jackdaw flying overhead reminded me of a ledge of earth and masonry, twenty feet from the ground, to which we had been accustomed to climb in pursuit of the callow birds.

I looked up and shook my head.

"Rather too steep for a man with a game arm."

For answer, Gerald began to climb with his old agility, and soon we two were lying stretched at full length on the small plateau at the top.

As neither of us seemed disposed to carry on a conversation, I surrendered myself to the drowsy influences of the afternoon, and fell asleep, like another Eutyches, to the preaching of the daws.

Suddenly I was aroused by a fierce grip on my arm.

"Listen," whispered Graham.

A sound of voices rose from beneath us, and I became very wide awake indeed when I recognised the tones of Isabel Alston and her friend, Miss Lacon.

"Here, let's get out of this," he went on, still in a whisper.

"Certainly not," was my reply. "You lie low like Brer Rabbit."

Just then a gust of merriment came to our ears, followed by a laughing protestation from Isabel Alston.

"I couldn't, really. I am not in the right frame of mind for it."

Miss Lacon's voice replied:

"But I insist. This is just the place for it. Many a heart has unburdened itself here in days gone by. Come now, make a clean breast of it. I know you have something on your mind."

"I don't know where to begin."

"Then I must put some leading questions to you. You have been behaving very badly to the young men of this neighbourhood, and I must ask if your intentions towards any of them are strictly honourable. Now, first of all, what about Major Weatherby?"

"Much too fat. I must have a lover who can play Romeo, not Falstaff."

"Percival Graves?"

"Too good. I couldn't live up to him. He thinks dancing wicked, and can only talk about what he calls the 'present distress in the Church.'"

Graham chuckled so loudly that he nearly disclosed our presence. Graves was his pet abhorrence.

"Then what about the hero of Nicholson's Nek? What about Gerald? Now, be very careful in your reply."

"Too colonial. Besides he is eight years older than I am, and has large feet."

"Isabel," said her friend, seriously, "he loves you very dearly—everybody knows that. Do you think you are treating him well?"

There was a long pause, then Miss Alston said tearfully, "I suppose I am very wicked. I know he cares for me, and yet I feel as if I can do nothing but play with him. It is very horrid of me."

"Would you mind if he went away?" continued her gentle inquisitor. "I heard this morning that he is likely to go to the front again."

"Go to the front," repeated Isabel in a tone of surprise and indignation. "Oh, he mustn't do that. I never thought of that."

I glanced at Graham. His face was white with suppressed excitement. His whole body trembled.

"Steady, old chap," I urged.

"I believe you really care for him after all," were the next words to come to our ears.

"Do you see this little silver ring?" Isabel answered. "I have worn it ever since he made it and gave it to me when I was a girl at school. I used to wear it on my finger, but when he went away I hung it round my neck."

"Why," she added, "I have always looked upon Gerald as mine. Dear, stupid fellow, I love him with all my heart."

"Now's your time," I ejaculated, "go in and win."

And Graham went in, with such impetuosity that through haste or excitement he missed his footing when half way down and literally fell at Isabel's feet.

"You mean creature to listen—oh, have you hurt yourself, Gerald?"

"Twisted my shoulder a little—that's all."

After a judicious interval, I ventured to peep over the edge.

Maud Lacon had withdrawn to a discreet distance, whilst Isabel's waist seemed to be supporting my old schoolfellow's disabled arm.

The sound of a kiss rose on the quiet air, and I became aware that Gerald Graham had distinctly wasted the cost of a cablegram.

David Garth.

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EUGENE ST. MEDARD.

MANY years ago, I arrived in Paris a perfect stranger, and took my lodgings at Meurice's famous English hotel. Having been shown to my apartments and made some change in my toilet, I went out for a short stroll in that great and magnificent city—the heart, as it were, of the world.

I had some letters of introduction, but, as I had not yet presented them, I believed myself wholly unknown to a living soul in that metropolis, except to the clerks of the hotel, who had seen me register my name, and that either should have fixed that name in their recollection was something that my modesty had not yet permitted me to take into consideration.

Judge of my surprise therefore, when I had gone but a few steps from Meurice's, 42 Rue de Rivoli, towards the beautiful palace gardens nearly opposite, to hear myself addressed as follows:

"Will Monsieur Henry Neville have the kindness to answer me a few important questions?"

I turned to the speaker, and saw at a glance he was a total stranger to me—that I had never, to my knowledge, looked upon his face before.

He was a middle-aged man, of rather prepossessing appearance, with grey hair, eyebrows and moustache, and was dressed as a plain, substantial citizen.

"I will do myself the pleasure to oblige you," I replied, in a polite and courteous tone. "Permit me first to remark, however, that you have a little the advantage of me, in that you already know my name."

"Monsieur will please know me as Eugene St. Medard."

"Did we ever meet before?"

"It is Monsieur that has now become the questioner," rejoined the Frenchman, with a peculiar smile and a kind of formal bow, half dignified, half polite, as if he would have said the questions were only to come from his side.

Somehow I felt a trifle vexed and nettled at the look and tone, and remarked a little coldly:

"I take it for granted one has the same right to interrogate as the other."

The features of the stranger grew grave, as one who feels a little annoyed, and his reply was impressive, without being exactly stern.

"If Monsieur will be kind enough to waive his right in this instance," he said, "it may save us both some time and trouble."

I scarcely knew why—perhaps something in the look, tone and manner—but the idea now suddenly occurred to me that I was speaking to a man in authority; and I said, respectfully:

"Proceed, Monsieur St. Medard."

"Thank you, Monsieur. You are an Englishman?"

"I am."

"You are distantly related to the Earl of Malvern?"

"So distantly that his lordship could never get near enough to know our family," I replied pleasantly, not a little surprised that a French stranger should know so much about me, and wondering all the while to what result his questions might be tending.

"You were an only child?"

"Yes."

"Your parents are dead?"

"Yes."

"You were left a small inheritance, which you have lately converted into money and brought with you, thinking it not unlikely you might take a fancy to settle on the Continent?"

"All true, Monsieur; but your knowledge of me and my private affairs astonishes me."

"Let that pass. The family of his lordship, the Earl of Malvern, has been unfortunate; no near of kin remain to him."

"Two profligate sons of a deceased sister are the nearest, I believe."

"They are both dead, Monsieur."

"Dead!" exclaimed I, with a start, for this was news to me.

"One died of heart-disease in Germany, the other was stabbed to death in Rome."

"Are you sure?"

"Certainly, Monsieur."

"Both of them! This astonishes me still more! I had not heard of this!"

"I know it."

"It seems to me you know everything!" said I, with a stare of wonder.

Monsieur St. Medard smiled, and continued:

"You are now the heir presumptive, Monsieur?"

"If what you tell me is true, I am," exclaimed I, almost startled at the thought of being so near to an earldom—for the then lord was old and feeble, and might drop off at any minute.

"Do you know who is next of kin after yourself, Monsieur?" inquired my strange interrogator.

"I think I have read it is one William Byerly."

"Right. Do you know him?"

"Only by report."

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"Personally?"

"No."

"Did report speak favourably of him?"

"I am sorry to say it did not."

"From what you heard, do you consider him an honest man?"

"I do not."

"As you alone now stand between him and an earldom after the death of the present lord, would you consider your life safe in his hands?"

"Before I answer this question, will you permit me to ask some two or three?" said I.

"Proceed, Monsieur."

"Are you William Byerly?"

"No."

"Are you related to him?"

"No."

"Are you a friend of his?"

"No."

"Do you intend to use my reply in a legal way?"

"No."

"Is your object in these questions friendly to me?"

"Yes."

"Then I will venture to say that I should not like under present circumstances, to trust my life in the hands of William Byerly, provided there were a single chance of his escaping detection in case of wilful murder."

"Very well. May I now proceed?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"You will please answer each statement of mine as if a question were directly put. On your way to Dover a fellow-traveller made your acquaintance?"

"Yes."

"You first saw him at Tunbridge?"

"Yes."

"You first noticed him while you were taking some refreshments at a restaurant?"

"Yes."

"He came up alongside of you, having a carpet-bag in his hand, and made some commonplace remark about the weather?"

"Yes," I continued to answer, getting more and more astonished every minute.

What could it all mean? Had every action of my life been noted, and for what purpose? My strange interrogator proceeded:

"This stranger was dressed in a black coat, with black cloth buttons, striped trousers, a parti-coloured tie, a white hat and patent-leather boots?"

"Yes."

"He had reddish hair, reddish whiskers, a florid complexion, and wore a green patch over his left eye?"

"Yes."

"After some commonplace remarks, he ventured to ask you which way you were travelling?"

"Yes."

"You replied you were going to Paris?"

"Yes."

"He was delighted to hear it, because he was going there also, and it was very pleasant, in a foreign country, to have a travelling companion from one's native land?"

"Yes."

"On the whole, he made so favourable an impression upon your unsuspicious mind, that you were quite pleased to have his company?"

"Yes."

"On your way to Dover he gave you some account of his past life—of his trials, struggles, disappointments and successes?"

"Yes."

"He was an inventor—a man of genius, who had lived to benefit mankind and himself? England owed much to him, and so did France, and so, in fact, did the whole world?"

"His statements were to that effect."

"Very well, Monsieur, as I have shown you that I know the nature of your conversation, it is not necessary that I weary you with detail. This man, this inventor, was going to Paris to take out a patent for a new motive power—one that was destined to revolutionize the world. He was very sorry he could not show it to you then; but until his papers should be filed in the proper department, he would not trust his own father with the secret?"

"All correct, Monsieur."

"Now, most unfortunately, as it appeared, on reaching Dover, where you were to take the regular steamer for Calais, your new acquaintance, in some way unknown to you, received the startling intelligence that his father was lying at the point of death, which would require him to post to London immediately; and would you, in whom he had every confidence, do him the favour to take charge of a small box, containing some important papers, and, on your arrival in Paris, open it, and deliver them to their proper addresses?"

"Yes, Monsieur," said I, becoming most intensely interested.

"Curiosity, Monsieur," continued the Frenchman, "is not one of your failings, I am happy to say, or you might not now be living to hear what I have to reveal."

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated I, "what is coming now?"

"*That same box, Monsieur, is an infernal machine, intended to destroy your life the moment you open it!*"

"Can it be?" I exclaimed, with a thrill of horror—"can this be possible?"

"I will prove it. Get it, and come with me before a commissary of police!"

"Pray, Monsieur, who are you?"

"A secret agent of police."

I hastened to get the box, handling it with great care' and together we proceeded to the nearest commissary' when, with my permission, it was split open, and lo! to my astonished and horrified gaze was revealed a row of small, loaded pistols, so arranged that, had I unlocked and opened the box in the ordinary way, they would have been discharged into my body.

On my subsequently asking for an explanation concerning this mysterious affair—how so much connected with myself and others had become known to the police of a foreign city—I was gravely but politely answered:

"It is not allowed us, Monsieur, to reveal our sources of information. We are happy to have thwarted the plans of a villain and saved your life."

I never knew who that villain was, though I always suspected Byerly of having a hand in it. I do not know that my life was ever again attempted, but certain it is I never again permitted intimacy from an unknown stranger.

On my accession to the title and estates, which occurred the following year, I did not forget to reward Eugene St. Medard, *alias* Henri Pouget, secret agent of police, as I thought he deserved to be rewarded for the preservation of my life; and to this day I have not ceased to wonder over the perfection of the French system of police.

O. S. S.

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Cute Constable Cobbles.

In the Commercial Room of the Black Magpie Hotel, near the Central Station, there entered, one evening, a fault'essly dressed and singularly frank and agreeable looking man of thirty.

He was followed very respectfully by Boots with some sample boxes bearing, in gold letters, the announcement:

"Trimmer and Jackson, Button Factory, Leeds."

"My name is Jones," said this imposing guest. "I shall stay some days. If anyone calls for me shortly, please tell them I am here, in the Commercial Room."

"I will, sir," said Boots.

A few minutes afterwards, he re-appeared bringing two such persons with him.

These also had fashionable clothes and pleasant, honest-looking countenances.

On Boots retiring, the visitors carefully looked round to see that no other people were in the apartment.

Then one of them exclaimed to Jones:

"Hallo, Bob! what on earth is this new game you are at? Wiring us from London to come to this town of all others? It's no use playing anything here. There's only one big jeweller in the place and the police here are as smart as smart can be. There's no chance!"

"I know that," replied Bob, "and that's why I've chosen it. There is no genius, no charm, in going to anywhere where you can make your living too easy."

"That's all very well for geniuses like you," put in the first speaker, "but it don't suit men of mere honest talent like us two. We daren't risk it."

"I quite admit that it's not safe for a pair of dunderheads like you to live anywhere out of a workhouse," answered Bob, "but I, who am, as you quite truthfully remark, a man of very superlative genius, take advantage of all difficulties to work mine ease the better thereby. Listen to me. A fine jewellers' shop—Messrs. Glitrums and Goldie of the High Street here—have £20,000 of splosh locked up in their safe every night. This safe is in the centre of a town supervised by a police so efficient that no professional communistic expert has ever attempted to get at it. Why? Because they never could do it and neither could I. The only man who could do that stroke here is a policeman himself."

"You've gone stark dotty," exclaimed both hearers.

"Nothing of the kind," retorted Bob. "All that is wanted is a constable who is known to be specially cute. That constable I have found. He is a beauty of the name of Cobbles and he is going to be on the High Street beat to-night. The rest is too easy."

"And do you mean to say you are about to be such a gull as to go pards with a policeman?" asked the audience in dumfounderment.

"Not so silly," replied Bob, "The policeman is going to let me rob the safe and skedddadle away comfortably with the whole of it, not to oblige me in any way and not for any share of the swag, but in the strict execution of his duty."

"Incredible!" cried both.

"Nothing of the kind. As easy as anything I've ever done. Listen to me."

And they listened.

* * * * *

It was a black, cold night. Constable Cobbles was on duty in the High Street, carefully wearing out the pavement with his fine flat soles.

"Constable Cobbles, I presume," said a well dressed gentlemanly man.

"The same, sir," said Cobbles.

"Don't you know me?"

"I can't say that I do, sir."

"Well that is strange, I would not have thought that of you who I've heard of as one of the smartest officers in this town."

Cobbles stood dumb with a mixture of shame and pride.

"I'm detective Ketchem of Scotland Yard," continued the gentleman.

"What him all the force is talking of? He as ran the great Brixton burglars to earth last week?"

"The same. I have just come from London close on the heels of two of the most desperate and clever men in the burglary business. From information received, I have sure grounds for believing they have planned for to-night a most daring robbery in this town."

"Good lor!" exclaimed Cobbles.

"Yes and it's near here and very near this hour that it's to come off. It's to be on the premises of Messrs. Glitrums and Goldie."

"You don't say so;"

"Yes. They got their particulars from a man lately discharged from that firm. He is keeping snug away in London. They have, from wax moulds, had keys made of the doors. In fact every preparation is perfect and the whole scheme most ingenious."

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"Ha! ha! this is grand," said Cobbles, "how they will grin on the wrong side of their noddles when they find we've nicely copped them in the very act."

"Just so. And now Cobbles, to business. I usually work these little jobs single handed and, when I come into a town on a trail, I lay low till I've got my prisoners before I report myself to the local station. For I don't believe in doing that beforehand and letting the local chiefs get any of the glory or very likely bungle the thing by their meddling with it."

"There's something in that," said Cobbles.

"But this is a case where two are wanted. I must have an assistant, and he must be a man of superior intelligence and one with the true qualification of a detective—a man who can keep his mouth shut till exactly the right time for letting out."

"That's just it. You've hit off the definition of a smart officer to a tee, sir," said Cobbles.

"Quite so," replied Ketchem. "Furthermore, my long experience enables me to tell a man's brains by a first glance at his face, and I can see that you have 'em. They are—I admit—rare in the force—but you have 'em."

"It's very good of you to say that, sir; and I'm pleased to have it from a man of your 'igh standing," said Cobbles, bursting with satisfaction.

"Quite so. Now I wonder whether you know for what particular function I want an assistant in this case."

"It's because there are two doors to Messrs Glitrums and Goldie's premises. One in front and one in the alley in the rear. You want me to keep watch at the rear one whilst you have hold of the front one," promptly replied Cobbles, proud of his clear brains.

"Precisely. Then is that agreed?"

"I am your man," exclaimed Cobbles, exultant.

"Right! But first let me give you a professional wrinkle for your benefit. You have taken it for granted I am what I represented myself to be—Detective Ketchem of Scotland Yard. Now, for all you know, I might have been a burglar myself."

"I 'umbly apologise, Sir, for not having gone through that formality; but I could tell in a minute that you were a detective," answered Cobbles confidently.

"Another item which proves to me, Cobbles, that you are a man of clear perception. But still, the right thing is never to overlook official formalities," and the great man took out of his breast pocket some papers which he was just about to unfold when another idea seemed to occur to Cobbles. He stayed the gentleman's hand and said:

"No, don't trouble, sir. Allow me in my turn to make a cute remark. If you were a rogue you would never be such a jay as not to come properly prepared for such a game as this, and have ready faked, all papers required."

Mr. Ketchem took a keen side squint at Cobbles, with an uncomfortable feeling as to whether this innocent looking clodhopper was or was not talking irony.

Suddenly, Mr. Ketchem exclaimed:

"Hark! I hear wheels in the distance! The plan is for them to come in a light dog cart, similar to the one owned by Mr. Goldie. Quick! Come into the shadow."

Cobbles obeyed with alacrity.

They were not a moment too soon. For they barely had time to conceal themselves, before a natty dog cart turned into the top of the High Street. It rattled past, followed swiftly by the men in the shadow.

Two gentlemen were on the dog cart. They pulled

TO METAMORPHOSE FAT PERSONS.

CORPULENCY AND THE CURE. By F. CECIL RUSSELL. London: (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square.)

"O that this too, too solid flesh would melt! has been the cry of countless mortals who have tipped the beam at several stones over their ordinary weight. They have sought relief of their burden of doctors, only in too many cases to find their advisers hopelessly at variance as to the methods to be employed for reducing them to the normal proportions. They have also had to combat the general but mistaken notion that excessive corpulence cannot be banished without danger to the general health of the body. Excessive fatness can never be considered a natural or healthy state of the body, and should be subjected to some sort of remedial treatment by everyone attacked by it. There has been no lack of attempts made in this direction by both medical men and scientists, but either the prescribed remedies have failed in affording permanent relief, or the system of cure recommended has been unfeasible for general adoption. Neither the one result nor the other, however, has attended the system of combating this malady prescribed by Mr. F. Cecil Russell; rather, from the fact that his work on the subject has just entered upon its eighteenth edition, must it be concluded that the system bearing his name has passed a very fair trial stage. In this little work the origin of fat, its dangers, symptoms, and so-called remedies are treated in detail, the workings of the latter explained, and the fallacy of trying superficial remedies clearly demonstrated. The system appears to be perfectly simple. It consists in taking three doses daily of a decoction made from common plants that (with one exotic exception) can be seen in our British meadows. If one reduces weight in a harmless way at the rate of 3lb. to 4lb. per week, and enjoys the moderate use of alcohol, it is very evident that this method is far away in front of the foreign treatment, which only makes the same reduction, and upon stringent regulations that are absolutely hostile to whisky drinking and almost impossible to maintain. One of the peculiarities of his system is that many patients upon reduction of superfluous fatty tissue become so healthy, and with an increased appetite, that they actually eat more food than before, and yet careful weighing testifies a daily decrease of flesh. The book is well worth reading."—*The Birmingham Daily Gazette*, July 3rd, 1900.

"DELIGHTFUL" TREATMENT FOR CURING CORPULENCE.

"CORPULENCY AND THE CURE.—People with a tendency to stoutness, and those who must be frankly classed as fat, will welcome any cure or alleviation of their condition, more especially this sultry weather. The process of clearing any physical disorder is so generally the converse of 'delightful' that the use of this and similar terms in reference to Mr. F. C. Russell's now popular treatment for corpulency naturally attracts special attention. These terms are to be found in a large number of the letters included in the just issued eighteenth edition of Mr. Russell's little volume of 256 pages, 'Corpulency and the Cure' (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.). These communications are from persons of both sexes, and it is apparent that their number is represented by thousands annually, who have found in this system of treatment a safe, rapid, and permanent cure for excessive fatness. This testimony forms in the aggregate, indeed, a remarkable record of the rapid reduction of excessive adipose tissue, and those who have personal reasons for being interested in the subject should send to the above address four penny stamps for a copy (post free) of Mr. Russell's notably suggestive little book. 'I think the treatment most delightful,' writes one out of large numbers of equally enthusiastic correspondents. And the expressions 'Admirable tonic,' 'Splendid stuff,' 'A delicious beverage, mixed with mineral waters' are of constant recurrence in this singularly interesting correspondence. The details given by many of the writers of these letters as to the result of the treatment fully justify the use of such eulogistic phrases. The experience, too, must be rendered still more delightful by the knowledge which may be gained from a perusal of Mr. Russell's book, that his preparation is a pure vegetable product, without any admixture of mineral poisons which are too frequently administered. Mr. Russell also prints in his book the recipe for the preparation."—*Nottingham Daily Express*, June 30th, 1900.

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Mr. Russell will be pleased to forward, post free, a copy of his book, "CORPULENCY AND THE CURE," 256 pages, in a sealed plain envelope to all applicants forwarding 4d. in stamps to Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C.

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up in front of Messrs Glitrums and Goldie's imposing establishment with its steel revolving shutters down and its black upper windows staring blindly into the night.

One gentleman alighted, opened the side door with a latch key, and went in.

"Now is the moment, Cobbles! Up you go the side alley to the back door! Sharp is the word!" whispered Mr. Ketchem.

But Cobbles now seemed much less alert in his movements than at first.

"Sir," whispered he, "had not you better go to the back and leave me to the front? You'll excuse me, sir, but your muscles are nothing like mine—and——"

"Don't be an idiot, Cobbles!" whispered Ketchem. "Do as I tell you! Don't you see the men will be off with the swag before we nab them if you dawdle like this?"

But the idiot had grown aggravatingly cogitative.

"It'll take 'em over ten minutes," whispered he, "before they can get off in that cart with anything worth taking. And I notice that one of the gents is remaining in the cart."

"Woodenhead," whispered Mr. Ketchem, whose face was blue with rage, "I warn you! Go at once to the back or I will give of you such a report to the Chief Constable as will get you kicked out of the force to-morrow morning, for the greatest dunderhead that ever wore blue trousers."

"You'll excuse me, sir," whispered the dunderhead, humbly, "but I remember that the back door is a narrow one and consequently you there alone can easily bar the passage of any number through it. Whereas, in front here, there is a wide door and two men and a horse to tackle and I am a young man of large and superior build. Every girl in the town will tell you that," continued the man in blue mildly.

"You'll drive me mad if you stop here a single second longer!" came from the parched throat of Mr. Ketchem, in gasping gurgles.

But Cobbles became more and more prosy in his conversation.

"Have you noticed, sir," he whispered, "how an idea grows in the mind by time and conversation, sir? An idea which, when first told, sometimes looks sometimes like something quite another after I've done a bit of a cackle all round it. For instance, there's another aspect of this fine notion of yours, sir, which has only just struck my thick head. It is this—but I'll tell it you later on. Meanwhile my place is at the back door, as you say, sir. Yes, sir, I'm off. See you again shortly."

Mr. Ketchem looked at the blank face of the ass as he disappeared into the side alley.

"Yes," reflected Ketchem, "I'm quite sure he is an ass. So that's all right."

The ass, as soon as he had turned off into the alley out of sight, made, with a swift rush, to a heap of stones in a corner, and filled his pockets with them. Remarking to himself complacently while he did so:

"Every ornamental accomplishment becomes useful some day if you only wait long enough—as the learned lady said when she found her manner of speaking Latin could scare the tramps away. I'm the champion fielder at cricket for twenty miles round. It's a-going to get me a fine rise in the police force to-night, unless I'm very much mistaken."

He then took a stone, and with a beautiful artistic aim, sent it clean into the centre of the middle back window of Messrs. Glitrum's and Goldie's establishment.

The crash of the glass resounded through the house like a shock of thunder.

Hardly had the concussion stopped than Cobbles was down at the end of the alley peeping round the front corner.

In half a second more he saw Mr. Ketchem and the gentleman, each with a packet in hand, rush out of the front door and scramble into the cart like grim death.

But before the last gentleman had got clear up the wheel to reach the seat, another artistically directed stone had landed on the first gentleman's skull and sent him, in a dream of stars, to the bottom of the vehicle.

And although not one quarter of a minute had elapsed between this occurrence and the starting of the horse at a wild rush up the High Street, yet the animal had not got his first pair of legs lifted ere a second masterpiece of projectile manipulation arrived just between the shoulder blades of the second gentleman in a way which made him suddenly howl for his mother and fall over the third gentleman, who was driving in front; and Cobbles had reached the cart and was hanging on to the back thereof.

The driver, and only remaining person in the citadel capable of combat, was now in an interesting position. He had to keep the horse from rushing them all into a lamp-post, or get over to the back of the cart and defend himself from Cobbles climbing into it.

In desperation he essayed the latter course; but the end of it came in a way which neither of them anticipated. The horse did not run into a lamp-post, nor did Cobbles get kicked off the cart.

The third man's entire weight being added to the weight of Cobbles dragging on to the back of the cart—which was a two wheeled one, so overbalanced the front that the horse, lifted off the ground by the strap running round him, and he, feeling so uncanny thereby, hanged his mind and stopped.

And the recoil, acting on the body of the third man, sent his chest over the back board in a way so handy for Cobbles to land his fist into, that he did so. And so effectively was this done that the third man went likewise, for the time, into the land of stars.

After this, Cobbles rammed the three down into the cart, one over the other, and, sitting on the top of them with a whip ready over their heads to keep matters peaceful on the way, drove them triumphantly to the police station, humming, as he went, those touching lines of a well-known music-hall poet:

"Do you take me for a silly, do you take me for a jay?
P'raps you think that I'm as simple as can be,
But you make a great mistake
For you'll find I'm wide awake,
It's no use of you to play your tricks on me."

Gaspard George.

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The Brain Gymnasium

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, August 6th, 1900.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 181.

When is 9 the same as $4\frac{1}{7}$?

No. 182.

If a clock takes five seconds in which to strike six, how long does it take to strike twelve?

No. 183.

I run, but without any exertion on my part. Behead me, I am a bird. Change my head, I am an article found in all houses.

No. 184.

Re-arrange the following letters so as to form two word-squares, the connecting word of which means keepers:

AAA B D EEEEEEE LL NNNN OO RRR SS VVV WWW.

No. 185.

The present of my FIRST reversed,
I truly hope you may;
Turned round aright it's often used
To mean the present day.

My NEXT an interjection, which
A health or toast implies;
To me and you what different scenes
This word will symbolize.

To find my WHOLE will prove a task,
Which all of you must face,
And yet your search will be in vain,
It's not in any place.

No. 186.

A country of Europe; a river in England; a celebrated painter; a river in Scotland; an island in the Mediterranean; a city in Russia; a town in Portugal; mountains in Russia; a river in Italy; a town in England.

My initials, read downwards, give the name of an important English town.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 156 to 162.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. Edgar Baynes, of Ealing, W., whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "Settled Out of Court," by G. B. Burgin, has been sent to:

W. Hannay, Tollington Park, N.
George Morton, Dublin.
Mrs. L. Ellis, East Stonehouse, Devon.
Pte. A. E. Timewell, Stonehouse, Plymouth.
O. Parker, Fulham, S.W.
L. Hennessy, Dowlais, S. Wales
C. Arnold, Hove.
W. McSparrow, Blantyre, Lanarkshire.
Dr. Cooke, Kew.
F. Baynes, London, W.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 163 to 168.

No. 163. $99\frac{99}{99} = 100$.

No. 164.

R I N G
I D O L
N O R A
G L A S G O W
G A G E
O G R E
W E E K

No. 165. Chair, hair, pair, air, fir, fin.

No. 166. TURPENTINE.

No. 167. "The pen is mightier than the sword."

No. 168. FOOT-BALL-MATCH. Football match.

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In the first place make up the best sentence you can out of seven words, each word commencing with a letter of **"BRITISH."** Thus, for example: **"British Rule In Transvaal Is Safeguarding Humanity."** You can cut out and use the following form if you like.

Be sure and mark envelope, left-hand top corner, "Short Stories," and forward to A.B. Cycle Co. Limited, 59, 60, 67, 68 & 69 Chancery Lane, Holborn.

Competition closes on Wednesday, Aug. 15th, 1900.

I*_____ of†_____

hereby declare that the sentence below is the only one I have sent in for this competition.

B	**R**	**I**	**T**
I	**S**	**H**	**Date of Posting.**

Don't forget to enclose two penny stamps.

* State whether Mr., Mrs., or Miss. † Full address to ensure result reaching you.

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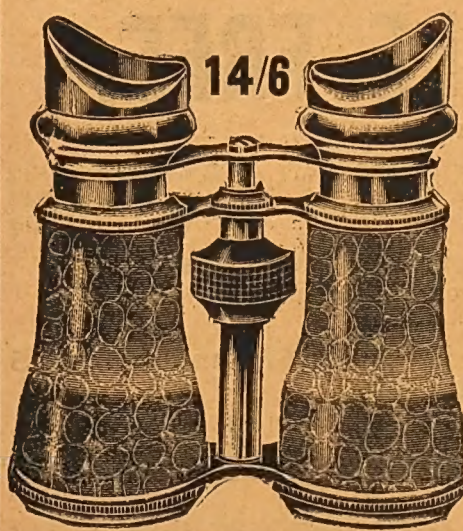

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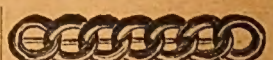

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